COSMOPOLIS

Number 57 January, 2005

SUBSCRIPTION DEADLINE is JANUARY 25th!

The deadline to order the complete set of VIE books is the 25th.

You cannot procrastinate any longer! Order on the VIE website.

Contents

And So It Ends

I know, we're not done yet, but for someone who's been with the VIE for as long as I have (Volunteer # 76) the time remaining is vanishingly small compared to the eons that have gone before. I've just received my last assignment, and it's like... well, the 'last'. You know, like when you leave some place — house, employment, country — and you'll suddenly find yourself doing 'last' things.

'Last' things that you're aware of. 'Last' things that *matter*; punctuation marks in the course of your life that add meta-meaning and frame its content. Punctuation we *notice*, as if we were proofing the copy and wondering if that comma really belongs here, or if it's just a stylistic quirk, or if that colon should really be a full-stop. In contrast to this consider those sentence marks we don't notice, because they, like someone wrote about Jack's style, are invisible, and by their implicitness serve to make limpid that which otherwise would be hidden.

For everything in life, every action we take, is a 'last', at the same time as it is a first; only our urge to generalize, simplify and abstract makes us believe otherwise. And, let's face it, everything could just be 'last' — because of our ignorance about what will be tomorrow, or maybe in the next few minutes, that will retroactively turn any given action into a 'last', by *anybody's* definition. I am not necessarily speaking about death — though death, life's ultimate punctuation mark, is the most obvious. But it need not be such a terminal event. Think about it some more, and you may come to understand that every unforeseen twist in the road of life — and there are unforeseen consequences in even the best-laid plans, schemes and stratagems — has the potential to make whatever one is doing at this very instant into a 'last'.

My elder daughter, who has made occasional, uncredited, proof-reading contributions to the VIE, once told me that she finds it hard to read *anything* without some deep urge to 'proof' it. Irritation with inadequately-proofread materials is a common occurrence. She once declared that she hadn't enjoyed a particular novel, which otherwise had definite 'potential', because she kept being distracted by the errors, grammatical and type-setting,

she encountered. It probably doesn't help that she's a graphic designer, who, *inter alia*, has an abiding, verging-on-hate dislike for certain fonts that seem to be cropping up everywhere these days; who will reflexively measure any human artifact on some internal aesthetic scale; and whose tolerance for *kitsch* is below zero — most of the time; I've yet to understand the fine distinctions inherent in the flexible standards of female judgment. (And I may get killed for writing this, too!)

I must confess that the same critical attitude has infected me as well, and I suspect that just about everybody involved with VIE-proofing must have undergone a similar or equivalent transformation, if they weren't already that way disposed. I don't know how anybody could possibly proof-read millions of words of Jack's writing and not be changed. And so it occurs to me that this labor of love that we all have united in for a while may have had consequences for ourselves that none would have anticipated. And, to get back to 'last' things, there probably was a point where, under the influence of VIE work, most of us became unable to continue reading with . . . well, maybe it's 'innocence' or something like that; where we were able not to be distracted by the imperfections in a text. This wasn't a sharp and noticeable twist in the roads of our lives, but a gentle bend that gradually and imperceptibly reoriented our mental landscape, to leave us wondering how come we suddenly ended up facing north when the last time we thought about it we were heading west.

Was this a loss or a gain? Who can say? Who can judge? Every action, every decision in life is a restriction on our freedom, as all those possibilities associated with a *different* decision become excluded from our range of choices. On the other hand it is also a prerequisite for opening up the whole range of possibilities contained in the path taken. We lose and we gain; the two go hand-in-hand no matter what we may think or want; an axiom of human existence.

Speaking for myself I am glad I went down that path, and I can live with the loss of reading-innocence if that's the price I had to pay for what I gained. I sincerely hope that most of you feel the same.

But now the time is approaching where we close this chapter in our lives. I want to take this opportunity for thanking everybody who made this project possible, and especially Paul — for we all know, that, after all is said and done, it wouldn't have gotten started or finished without him. I also want to thank Paul on a more personal level, and he knows why. As for the rest, I got to know some very interesting people, many of whom I'd really like to meet in person one day — and some of whom I'm *determined* to visit. There were some surprises here, too, and some lessons in the 'unexpected'.

All in all it has been, as the saying goes, 'quite a trip', and now that the ending has almost been written and the light at the end of the tunnel may indeed be the other exit, and not a train, I must say that the journey was worth it. Not only for the sake of Jack, but for what it brought to the participants, the companions in the quest, if I may digress into waxing lyrically. Growth is never easy and we certainly had the 'not-so-easy' patches. But it was an amazing journey. Truly amazing.

So, folks, take stock of the 'last' things you've been doing in the context of this enterprise; and maybe allow this to filter into your lives in other ways, taking note of the visible and invisible punctuation marks in your own existence as it threads through time and space towards places sometimes very unanticipated.

Signing off.

Till Noever

Till was the Editor of the Cosmopolis Literary Supplement*, a frequent contributor to* cosmopolis*, and a volunteer in many areas of the VIE program.*

Work Tsar Status Report

as of December 26, 2004

One text is undergoing TI Review as a result of Post Proof.

Three texts are in Composition Updating and Review.

Eight of the last 11 volumes are undergoing Blues review and will be ready for printing and binding shortly. The final three are being worked on to be completed ASAP.

Delivery of Wave 2 volumes is being anticipated in Spring 2005. The end is nigh.

Last month:

+ In-TI: 0 texts (0%)
+ Post-TI: 4 texts (4.9%)
+ Volume Ready: 78 texts (95.1%)
+ Volumes Ready: 8 (36.36%)
+ Volumes Completed: 11 (50%)

This month:

+ In-TI: 0 texts (0%)
+ Post-TI: 4 texts (4.9%)
+ Volume Ready: 78 texts (95.1%)
+ Volumes Ready: 8 (36.36%)
+ Volumes Completed: 11 (50%)

Joel Riedesel

Heroes and Villains: Jack Vance's Early Editors

David B. Williams

Standing between every writer and his readers is an editor. He or she has the ultimate power to accept or reject. If a manuscript is accepted, the editor then has the power to add, delete, alter, and rearrange the author's words, to good or ill effect.

Several editors played significant roles in the early decades of Jack Vance's writing career. The first was Sam Merwin, editor of Startling Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories, 1944–51.

Merwin was a minor SF and mystery writer before joining the staff of the pulp magazine chain that published SS and TWS. He once boasted that he had never read an SF magazine before becoming the editor of these two. At the time, SS and TWS were slanted toward a juvenile audience. Merwin steadily raised the standards of his magazines until they were second in the field only to John Campbell's Astounding.

Merwin was the hero who launched Vance's writing career by publishing "The World-Thinker" in the Summer 1945 issue of TWS. He featured Vance's name on the cover, unusual recognition for a first-time author.

This went some way toward compensating for an earlier blunder, because Merwin also had the distinction of being one of the editors who rejected the stories that later became *The Dying Earth*. In an autobiographical essay on his days as a pulp-magazine editor, Merwin recalled receiving several "fascinating but, alas, unpublishable, pseudo-Cabell fantasies" from Jack Vance.

From 1945 to 1950, Vance published 15 stories, and Sam Merwin bought 12 of them, playing a primary role in establishing Vance's name in the SF field. In 1951, Samuel Mines succeeded Merwin. Vance was now a regular and popular contributor to SS and TWS, and Mines continued to buy most of Vance's output until the magazines folded in 1955 during the general collapse of the pulp magazine industry.

But Mines has to be credited with one act of villainy. He would be the editor who cut the manuscript of *Big Planet* from 72,000 to 48,000 words to fit into one issue of Startling Stories. (SS didn't run serials; its marketing slogan was "a complete novel in every issue.") These lost chapters of *Big Planet* are gone forever, because the original manuscript no longer exists (Vance's habit was to use the backs of old manuscripts to write first drafts of new stories).

While most of Vance's early stories appeared in SS and TWS, in 1947 he sold "I'll Build Your Dream Castle" to editor John Campbell at Astounding Science Fiction, the premier SF magazine of the era. Selling to this demanding market was a mark of distinction for a fledgling writer.

Campbell was an influential SF writer before assuming editorship of Astounding in 1937. Within two years, he inaugurated "the Golden Age of SF" in the pages of his magazine by discovering and developing many new writers, including Asimov, Heinlein, Sturgeon, and Van Vogt.

Vance submitted all his early stories to Campbell first; aside from the prestige of Astounding, it paid the highest word rate. But Vance never succeeded in joining Campbell's stable of regular contributors and managed to place only five other stories in Astounding: "The Potters of Firsk" in 1950, "Telek" in 1952, "The Gift of Gab" in 1955, "The Miracle Workers" in 1958, and "Dodkin's Job" in 1959.

"The Narrow Land", published in Fantastic Stories in 1967, was written for Campbell as the first of a three-story sequence. "But Campbell didn't like it very much," Vance recalled. "In fact, he was rather unreasonable. Since it didn't sell in a good market, I never completed the sequence."

"John Campbell couldn't see me for sour owl spit," Vance said in a telephone interview with VIE volunteers (*Cosmopolis* 42, September 2003). "Although that's not quite true, as soon as I wrote a story for Campbell that involved telepathy, or something similar, he went for it . . . . Campbell was engrossed with things like telepathy, telekinetics, extra-sensory perception of all kinds . . . . I knew I could always sell him something, as long as I threw in something of that sort. Some of my worst stories—just hack writing, some of the worst I've ever written, I sold it to him; he loved it."

Eventually, Vance would define his literary independence in terms of editor Campbell: He got tired of writing

to please Campbell and began writing to please himself. For that reason, if nothing else, Campbell can't be rated as a complete villain. And he did, after all, feature two of Vance's contributions as cover stories, one of which, "The Miracle Workers," earned Vance his first Hugo Award nomination. (The other cover story was "The Gift of Gab.")

There's no question about Damon Knight's hero status. Knight was a short-story writer and occasional editor in the 1940s. He would later win a reputation as an influential critic and editor of original anthologies. His collection of early reviews, *In Search of Wonder*, won a Hugo Award in 1956.

In 1950, Knight was named editor of a new magazine, Worlds Beyond, and bought two Vance stories. The publisher, Hillman Periodicals, was also launching a paperback line, and Knight asked Vance whether he had anything for a book. Vance reworked the unsold fantasy manuscripts he had written at sea during the war, included narrative links to tie them together, and *The Dying Earth* became Hillman No. 41. *The Dying Earth* made a tremendous impression in the field and raised Vance to the first rank of fantasy writers.

Worlds Beyond only lasted three issues, but the magazine and its editor made a brief but significant contribution to Vance's career. In addition to promoting *The Dying Earth* with an excerpt, "The Loom of Darkness," in the first issue, Knight bought "Brain of the Galaxy" and "The Secret" and provided the idea for "Abercrombie Station." "Brain of the Galaxy" (later titled "The New Prime") attracted attention with its structural novelty, intriguing readers with five wildly unconnected opening scenes that are, in fact, integral to the story.

"The Secret" entered Vancean legend when Worlds Beyond folded before the story could be printed and the manuscript was lost. Some years later Vance rewrote the story, but this second manuscript disappeared while his agent was circulating the story to potential markets. Vance was unable to find the carbon copies of either manuscript. He decided the story was jinxed and gave up on it, but in 1976 he was startled to learn that the story had appeared in an English SF magazine, Impulse, in 1966 without authorization. Where the manuscript had been, and how it got to England, are mysteries.

Knight also gave Vance the idea of an orbiting satellite as a weightless paradise for grossly obese people and commissioned a story for his magazine. Vance thought this idea was "inspired" and wrote "Abercrombie Station." When Worlds Beyond folded before he could submit the story to Knight, he sold it to Thrilling Wonder Stories. After the story appeared in print, Knight complimented Vance on the concept and said, wistfully, that the same idea had occurred to him but he never got around to writing the story. Vance reminded Knight that he had suggested the original idea and gave Knight due credit when the story was reprinted in *The Best of Jack Vance* (1976).

Frederik Pohl began as a short-story writer, editor, and agent in the 1940s. As editor of the *Star Science Fiction Stories* series of original paperback anthologies, 1953-59, Pohl bought Vance's "The Devil on Salvation Bluff" for *Star SF No. 3*, 1955.

As editor of Galaxy from 1961–69, Pohl published some of Vance's best work: "The Dragon Masters" and "The Last Castle" (both award winners) and the first and third Demon Princes novels, *The Star King* and *The Palace of Love*.

The Killing Machine was scheduled for Galaxy's companion magazine, If, but a communication snafu among Vance's agent and the magazine and book publishers resulted in Berkley Books releasing the paperback edition before the magazine could print the first installment of the novel. This killed the serialization, but not before the cover had been painted. For an artist's conception of Interchange, see the January 1965 issue of If.

Pohl can't be hailed as a total hero, however. As a magazine editor with strictly limited space, he cut the epigraphs that precede many chapters in the Demon Princes novels. These selections from Baron Bodissey, the adventures of Marmaduke, and many excerpts from the oratory and literature of the Oikumene are generally considered one of the principal charms of the Demon Princes books. The readers of Galaxy didn't know what they were missing.

Donald A. Wollheim has to be classed among the great editor heroes of Vance's career. In 1934, at age 19, Wollheim sold his first story to legendary genre founder Hugo Gernsback for Wonder Stories. When he didn't received payment, he checked with other writers and discovered that they hadn't been paid either. Wollheim filed suit against Gernsback, winning a settlement for himself and his fellow writers.

Wollheim became an increasingly important editor in the 1940s. He edited the first notable SF anthology, *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction*, in 1943 and the first anthology of original stories, *The Girl with the Hungry Eyes and Other Stories*, in 1949.

Wollheim held the editorial chair at Ace Books 1952–71. Ace's publication of *Big Planet* in 1958 began a relationship that would give new life as paperback books to many

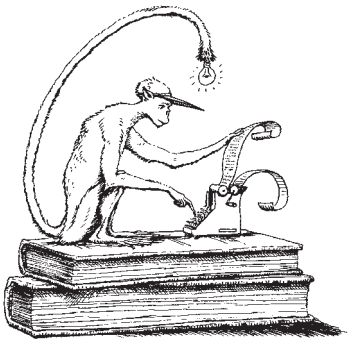
of Vance's stories and novels from the pulp magazines. The same year, *Big Planet* was paired with *Slaves of the Klau* for Vance's first Ace Double. Then, after a pause of five years, a steady stream of Doubles followed with *The Dragon Masters* and *The Five Gold Bands* in 1963, *The Houses of Iszm* and *Son of the Tree* in 1964, *Monsters in Orbit* and *The World Between and Other Stories* in 1965, *The Brains of Earth* and *The Many Worlds of Magnus Ridolph* in 1966.

Some of these Ace Doubles enjoyed second editions a few years later. Ace singles followed book publication of *The Languages of Pao* and magazine publication of *The Eyes of the Overworld*. The four Tschai books were commissioned as an original paperback series.

When Wollheim left Ace Books and established his own paperback imprint, DAW Books, in 1972, he took Jack Vance with him. At DAW, Wollheim republished the first three Demon Princes titles and signed Vance to complete the series. DAW promoted Vance as a major SF author and systematically republished all the Vance titles for which rights were available.

To mark completion of the Demon Princes series with the publication of *The Book of Dreams* in January 1981, DAW celebrated Jack Vance Month and advertised its list of twenty Vance titles. Of all Vance's editors, Wollheim did more to promote and popularize Vance than any other. The majority of today's mature Vance aficionados discovered their favorite author thanks to an Ace or DAW paperback.

All of these editors played a part in establishing Jack Vance in the SF and fantasy fields and advancing his career. Each was both hero and villain to varying degrees. They bought his work and thereby kept Jack Vance writing. They also changed his titles and befouled his texts with their own emendations. But perhaps we should pardon these editorial transgressions because, ultimately, these editors recognized Vance's talents and, by buying the kind of stories he wanted to write, they allowed this remarkable artist to develop his distinctive narrative voice and attract an audience of devoted readers.



38's Crucible

WAVE 2 PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Batch 2

We have received the 'ozilids' (or 'blues' or 'proofs') for the 'batch 2' volumes, and a 'GM4' virtual process is underway, organized by Steve Sherman. The participants are: Charles King, Chris Prior, Joe Keyser, Joel Riedesel, Karl Kellar, Malcolm Bowers, Marcel van Genderen, Rob Friefeld, Robert K. Melson, Ruth Hunter, Thomas Rydbeck, Till Noever and Tim Stretton.

These folks are sacrificing holiday vacation time to perfect these VIE volumes, for VIE subscribers and the glory of the work of Jack Vance. Errata from this process will be collated and 'nunced' in the second week of January. This 'GM4 virtual' schedule, and a few other minor snags, has prompted Stefania Zacco to propose a more prudent packing schedule.

Packing Update

The current packing plan, for the wave2 boxes, is late March, and for the 'second printing' (a whole set for post-wave1 subscribers) in late April or May. The volunteers, to date, have been informed. They are: Andreas Irle, Billy and Gail Webb, Chuck and Kristine King, Craig Thomas, Evert Jan de Groot, Hans van der Veeke, Josh Snyder, Lael Harris, Jurriann Kalkman, Menno van der Leden, Misi Mladoniczky, Nicola de Angeli, Rob Friefeld, Stephen Patt, Thomas Rydbeck, Vincent de Montmollin, Wilma Bouwmeester, and Errico Resigno. Henri Goorin reports he probably can't make it.

If you are interested in helping in Milan, do not hesitate to volunteer. Packing volunteers will be kept informed in a timely manner as plans solidify.

Volume 44

Chuck King is running a special volume-post-proofing pass on volume 44, which is now composed. In this volume the VIE will publish: *Cat Island*, *The Stark*, the 1962 revision of *I'll Build Your Dream Castle*, *The Kragen* (the novella from which *Blue World* was developed), *The Telephone Was Ringing in the Dark* (a novel outline), the 1969 revision of *Guyal of Sfere*, *Clang* and *The Magnificent Red Hot Jazzing Seven* (two movie treatments), and *Wild Thyme and Violets* (a novel outline). In addition there will be a list of all VIE texts,

in chronological order as written, plus a cross-referenced catalogue of all Vance titles—including annotations on VIE restoration sources and other matters of interest. There will also be a VIE project essay by Tim Stretton ('A Disparate and Uncertain Group, Lacking Both Grandeur and Consistency: The Story of the V.I.E. and its Managers'), a TI essay by Alun Hughes ('Strange Animals in Questionable Poses: The Reconstruction of the V.I.E. Texts') and some 80 pages of project credits organized by volunteer, and also by text.

A Word on Maps and Diagrams

One of the special treats of volume 44 will be the 5 *Stark* diagrams, prepared by Joel Anderson. This text, as well as the diagrams, was made available to the VIE by Hap Watson and his daughter.

In addition to correct texts the VIE has also restored the maps. We are also publishing all previously un-published maps that have been located, notably Pao, Shant and Durdane.

It is sometimes wondered why Vance's original maps are not simply reproduced. The reason is that all sketches were not intended for publication but as guides for final versions. Such final versions must be adapted to the format and printing technology of a given book. In several cases the VIE has had access to the original sketches. In other cases the originals are lost, for example two of the San Rodrigo maps. But, as we do have two of the four original drawings we were able to create a consistent set of maps on an authentic basis. The original Fens drawing (*Trullion*) is lost, and in this case we worked from the various published maps, including the Dutch version, each of which seem to be an independent version from the lost original. The original *Maske:Thaery* and Ambroy (*Empyhrio*) maps are also missing, but the published versions seem reliable; the VIE version is based upon them. The *Tschai* map seems at least partly original. In this case the VIE followed the example of the other publishers by completing the map from textual indications for rivers and cities. Vance's *Dragon Masters*, Pao and Durdane (the planet as opposed to Shant) sketches are quite summary, and were more or less filled out from textual information or our best speculations. The Vissel River ('*Showboat*') map is a special case. The original seems lost, and in any case was never quite correct. The VIE version benefits from correction work done previous to the project and by our own efforts (particular thanks to Joel Riedesel and Norma Vance).

There may or may not exist map sketches for such books as *The Domains of Koryphon*. It would be fairly easy to create speculative maps of Koryphon, and many other worlds. The VIE has refrained from this. Other publishers may legitimately make such efforts, as has been done for example with the Cugel stories. An old sketch by Vance of that world exists but consists of nothing more than a vague scrawl of coastline with two or three cities casually indicated. Close study of the stories shows that a consistent map, taking all textual evidence into account, is impossible without grotesque contortions. A map does not seem a genuine or useful adjunct in this case.

See *Cosmopolis 46* and *47* for a detailed presentation of many VIE map issues.

The French Connection

Patrick Dusoulier and I enjoyed a supernal dinner of seven fish courses and two wines last December at 'La Table de Lucullus' in Paris. On that occasion Patrick presented me with the five recent French Vance publications, all based on VIE texts (translated, retranslated, or corrected). *Space Opera*, translated by Arlette Rosenblum and published in 2003 by Folio SF (Gallimard*), fails, by negligence, to mention the VIE connection, but it is there. This mistake is corrected in Folio's *Madouc*, 2003 (the first integral *Madouc* text published in French), where a page of 'remerciements' is devoted to the VIE, including mention of Patrick's special contribution and the VIE project URL. *Croisades*, a story collection including *Rumfuddle*, *Dodkin's Job*, *The Miracle Workers* and *Crusade to Maxus*, was published in 2003 by Bélial, and includes the same 'remerciements'. In 2004, as part of their *Lunes d'Encre* (Moon of Ink) line, the publisher Denoël has brought out two fat volumes of collected stories. *Emphyrio & Autres Adventures*, besides *Emphyrio*, includes *Clarges* and the integral set of the ten Magnus Ridolph stories, two never before published in French. *Les Maîtres des Dragons & Autres Aventures*, besides *The Dragon Masters*, includes *The Languages of Pao*, *The Domains of Koryphon* and *Maske:Thaery*. Both of these volumes (the result of three years' work) include a foreword by Gilles Dumay, director of Lunes d'Encre line, which gives information about the texts in question, but have matter in common, including the first paragraph, translated here:

In parallel to the work of rediscovery of the work of Jack Vance orchestrated by Olivier Çerard and Pierre-Paul Durasanti of Bélial editions, and coordinated with the work initiated by Sebastien Çuil-

* One of the oldest and most glorious of all French publishing 'houses'

lot of Gallimard in the Folio SF collection, Denoël has launched itself into the needed re-publication of a certain number of Vance texts, both novels and stories, which have long been out of print

The VIE is mentioned several times in this introduction as the source of the texts, with fuller information, including the project URL, given in a footnote. Patrick is thanked for: 'the VIE texts, and his responsiveness and enthusiasm'. The literary agents Anne and Pierre Lenclud are thanked, among other things, for providing the number of Patrick's mobile telephone. The introduction ends with the announcement that Denoël will soon publish an integral edition of *Durdane**, as well as a several-volume integral edition of the author's short stories collated by Patrick Dusoulier.†

The Euro

VIE management contemplates the meteoric rise of the euro with a sentiment of smug invulnerability. Thanks to the wise prognostics of, in particular, Tim Stretton, Thomas Rydbeck, Mike Berro, Dave Reitsema and Bob Lacovara, as well as the rapid and responsive action of John Vance—in his role as Treasurer—by converting the necessary section of its war-chest into that utopian currency the project has protected itself—and subscriber investment—from the currency fluctuation *tsunami* which, as its liquid homologue which has devastated Asia, is spreading chaos in western finance.

Subscribers also may take this opportunity to enjoy a moment of self-congratulation. Were it not for their non-risk-free investment in the Vance Integral Edition, the physical reality of several hundred book sets could not exist. Prior to the publication of wave 1 the only insurance subscribers had was the knowledge that the VIE project was made up of Vance readers; which is to say—despite a note of fantasy in their natures—persons of probity and keen instincts! After the publication of wave 1, however, had we not converted to euros the project would now be constrained to beg subscribers for more money or to return the unspent money of subscribers who could or would not invest further funds. Today the euro stands at $1.35. When we paid for wave 1 it was, if memory serves, at about 95¢. Given that we have sought, through the system of volunteer work, to restrict the VIE price to printing and binding costs, we have from the beginning operated 'close to the knuckle'. To printing and binding costs, must be added another set of expenses, which constitute between 5 and 10% of the total (we'll know the exact figures only when the project is done), including printing and mailing of proofs, plus travel, lodging and board for the various GM and packing meetings (only for those who cannot finance this aspect of their VIE volunteerhood). Because the project operates on an international basis, many of these expenses are also affected by currency fluctuation.

As matters stand, the VIE proceeds toward completion free from financial crisis.

* based, naturally, on VIE texts

† The actual text, with its untranslatable culinary reference, is: une intégrale raisonnée des nouvelles de l'auteur en plusieurs volumes, concoctée à feu très doux par Patrick Dusoulier

Work Notes

The last official Post Proofing job was complete on December 16, 2004. This was followed by TI review, performed by Rob Friefeld on December 26, and Post Proofing Verification, by myself, on December 27-28 (in consultation with Steve Sherman). As of this writing the bis file is in the hands of Joel Anderson for 're-comp', and by the time these words see publication the file will probably have reached Milan for initial proofs.

The Post Proofing Verification pass revealed high-level alertness from all volunteers involved, whom I would like to cite here: Patrick Dusoulier, for RTF-DIFF (October 26); Marcel van Genderen, with two of his crack operatives: Brian Gharst and Karl Kellar, for Composition Review (November 4); Joel Anderson, for up-dating an already lovely composition (November 8); Bob Luckin, Composition Verification maven *par excellance*, for another sample of his unfailingly thorough work (November 15). And, of course, Till Noever, and his famous *Spellers of Forlorn Encystment*: Malcolm Bowers, Phil Cohen, Harry Erwin, Rob Gerrand, Peter Ikin, Bob Moody, Axel Roschinski, Bill Sherman, Mark Shoulder, Rudi Staudinger and Dave Worden.

Bravi.

We should soon be treated to a wave 2 Post Proofing Honor Roll.

Etchings Contest

Kingsley Sawyers (East Sussex, United Kingdom) won the final prize in the contest announced in *Cosmopolis* 54. The first two were won by Richard Chandler, but no one correctly identified the missing element in the etching for *The Anome*. Most entries incorrectly guessed that the missing element was Ifness' torc. Kingsley answered "After a (depressingly long) reappraisal of the picture, the

missing element is the upper half of the front-left wheel of the wagon, which should be visible in front of Ifness' left leg and in front of the tree." For the correct answer Kingsley will receive the prize which, appropriately, is the finished version of the etching which includes the "missing" element. Congratulations, Kingsley!

How to Praise Lurulu

1

INTRODUCTION

Now that *Lurulu* has been on the market for several months commentary is seeping into publication. So far it seems globally unenthusiastic. This is discouraging but need not amaze us; the world has failed to be properly enthusiastic about Vance for decades. This attitude is not likely to change as a still growing and evolving artist pens what may be his ultimate masterpiece — in all senses of the word. It is a story still too new — again in all senses of the word — to be understood swiftly. *Lurulu*, of course, is no more and no less than the second half of a book called *Ports of Call*. The latter, unlike *Lyonesse* or *The Cadwal Chronicles*, was never intended to appear in parts. The author, who turned 88 in August of 2004, was suffering progressive blindness which, as he worked on *Ports of Call*, had become effectively total. Though persisting with courage, natural delays eventually provoked an unnatural split. Having published *Night Lamp* in 1995, and with the writing of *Ports of Call* — a story for which he had already been paid — threatening to prolong itself into 1998, or even farther, he stopped where he was and published 12 chapters.

Many readers of the epilogue of *Ports of Call* failed to understand that it is a partial work. I attribute this to Vance's notorious allusiveness. The epilogue contains no phrase such as: 'In the next book we learn how Myron Tany . . .' Vance may be sinfully enjoyable but he is not necessarily easy reading. The VIE, disdaining such accidents of circumstance, will put *Ports of Call* and *Lurulu* between the covers of one book, VIE volume #43, and call it *Ports of Call*, perfecting the presentation of this notable work.

I am happy to repeat: *Ports of Call* is a masterpiece. It is even, I will venture, Vance's greatest work because it is the most characteristic. Even in his early work Vance is quite an original writer. Though beginning in familiar genres, already in the 1940's and 50's Vance's work is steeped in such characteristically vancian issues as the problematic relationship of beauty and goodness (T'sais' twisted brain in *Mazirian the Magician*), the solipsistic nature of evil (Paul Gunther in *The House on Lily Street*), whimsical logic (Cugel's canceling of maledictions) and a counter-current pro-democratic outlook which assured him a place on the unwritten black-list of the cultural establishment. Still, compared to *Ports of Call*, *Cugel the Clever* is a 'fantasy', *The House on Lily Street* is a 'mystery', and even such towering works as the Demon Prince books or *Lyonesse* can be labeled, with a certain justice — however lame — 'science fiction' and 'fairytale'. But what is *Ports of Call*?

One explains what a thing is by saying what it is like. I am positive *Ports of Call* is not modeled on such classics, but the only things it resembles are books like *Le Conte du Graal* ('The Tale of the Holy Grail', also called: 'Perceval le Gallois') an unfinished epic poem or 'novel' by Chrétien de Troyes* (1137-1190), or *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)†, or Rabelais' *Pantagruel*. *Ports of Call* also resembles *The Metamorphosis* (Ovid; 43 B.C. -17-18 A.D.), *The Decameron* (Boccaccio; 1313-1350) *The Canterbury Tales* (Geoffrey Chaucer; 1342-1400), or *Gulliver's Travels* (Jonathan Swift; 1667-1775). But, unlike *Perceval le Gallois*, *Don Quixote*, or *Pantaguel* these latter 'poems', 'novels' or 'books' are unabashedly episodic, by which I am not saying that their parts are disconnected but that the connection between them is not the connection of 'story'. They are composite wholes, not organic wholes. With Chrétien de Troyes, Miguel de Cervantes, and Jack Vance, we have *story*, a tale of the adventures of a 'hero': the young and starry-eyed Perceval, the old and addled Don Quixote, or the young and somewhat starry-eyed Myron Tany. The story may have distinct parts, but these are not without direct relations which, if not necessarily superficial, often occur on more than one sub-level. Perceval, Don Quixote and Myron are on a quest the goal of which they do not necessarily understand. They even start out by being after the wrong thing. They are in search of their search.‡

To recount *the story* of his hero, like Chrétien and Cervantes, Vance constructs an interlocking and overlapping story-constellation. Some of the characters, like Cervante's Sancho Panza, accompany the hero. Others — like

---

* Considered by many the greatest medieval writer of Arthurian romances.

† Published, like *Ports of Call–Lurulu*, in two parts, the first in 1605, the second ten years later.

‡ *Pantagruel* is also the story of a quest: Pantagruel, voyaging by sea from port to port with his companions, seeks to learn if he should marry. I will not comment on this book, except to say that Pantaguel, by subtle contrast with Perceval, Don Quixote and Myron, begins with a clear goal.

Perceval's mother, the Sleeping Maiden or the Fisher King — are encountered and re-encountered or recalled. Myron travels with the crew of the *Çlicca*, and encounters and re-encounters, or recalls various characters: Dame Hester, the pilgrims, Tibbet Garwig. Chrétien de Troyes uses a further strategy: at one point he leaves the story of Perceval to follow the tangential and related story of Gawain. We also find this in Vance, as when Wingo buys antiques at Felker's Landing or when Moncrief arranges a program at the Trevanian.

Myron Tany's status of 'hero', or even a 'protagonist' is disputed by some critics. It has been complained that Myron serves only to establish an artificial thread to weakly and clumsily pull together a set of totally disparate and disconnected episodes, that he is so colourless the book would be better without him. We will look at this question below.

If Cervantes is obviously a comic writer who assumes an unambiguous posture of irony, it should not be thought that mockery, however civilized, is his only mode. Cervantes is not cynical. Poking fun at nobility is a way of talking about nobility. The medieval Spanish idea of nobility may not be Cervantes' idea. That does not mean it fails to exist for him. Don Quixote is absurd when he tilts at windmills but he is more than absurd. There is nobility in his absurdity. A windmill is not a monster just as, to pick an example at random, Communism is not, shall we say, a 'savior of humanity'. Are not, then, our Communism-regretting friends quixotic when, despite its millions of victims, they proclaim their beloved doctrine none-the-less to embody a beautiful and eternally inspiring dream? Behind the monstrous, behind the absurd, there can be something grandiose, perhaps even noble. Don Quixote is deluded, but sometimes his delusions reveal common sense to be even more deluded. Sancho Panza is vulgar but sometimes his vulgarity is more refined than the refinement of normal society. Sancho Panza, furthermore, has the qualities of his faults; crude but down to earth, shrewd but generous, cowardly but efficient. The adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are only superficially nonsensical.

We like to think — we flatter ourselves when we do — that his comedy makes Cervantes 'modern', as if only such glorious beings as ourselves might see how myopically 'first-degree' folks used to be. But if Chrétien de Troyes does not wear his comedy on his sleeve he is no less comic than his illustrious successor. The designation 'modern', if it means anything at all, means nothing in this context. If, as the poem unfolds, it becomes clearer and clearer that Perceval's adventures are loaded with grave portent, they begin in slap-stick misadventures not unlike those of Cugel. For example, leaving home to pursue his dream of chivalry — of which he understands almost nothing beyond the glittering splendor of arms and the pride of heraldic figures — his mother gives him hasty lessons in comporture. Distracted by his visions of glory Perceval listens with only half an ear as his mother explains courtly manners regarding women. Just prior to forcing himself upon the first female he encounters, Perceval rehearses his mother's lesson:

Et li vaslez, qui nices fu,
dist: "Pucele, je vos salu,
si con ma mere le m'aprist.
Ma mere m'anseigna et dist
que les puceles saluasse
an quelque leu que les trovasse."
La pucele de peor tranble
por le vaslet qui fol li sanble,
si se tient por fole provee
de ce qu'il l'a sole trovee.
"Vaslez, fet ele, tien ta voie.
Fui, que mes amis ne te voie.
— Einz vos beiserai, par mon chief,
fet li vaslez, cui qu'il soit grief,
que ma mere le m'anseigna.
— Je, voir, ne te beiseré ja,
fet la pucele, que je puisse.

And the varlet, who was naive
said: "Maid, I salute you,
as my mother taught.
She taught me saying
politely greet maidens
wherever you find them."
The maid trembled for fear
for the varlet seemed mad,
if it is madness
that he found her alone.
"Varlet," said she, "hold your tongue.
Flee, that my friends not see you."
"I'll kiss you, by my heart!"
said he, "no matter who cares,
as my mother taught."
"See here, I'll kiss you never!"
*said the maid, "if I can help it."**

But Chrétien de Troyes goes farther than that. He offers us a spectacle of the sort of artistic self-consciousness which, in smug contemplation of our modernist navels, we assume is unique to us. When Perceval must recount an earlier adventure to a personage in a later one, the author cuts it short with a line to this effect: 'the reader has heard all about that already and there is no point in boring him with a repetition!' Or, though some of the combats are described in detail, in one case the author stops short before a fight and says: 'I could give a blow by blow account,

* A more or less literal translation, with help from Patrick Dusoulier who is not responsible for any subsequently introduced errors.

but why bother? It's enough to say they gave each other a good beating.'

We might say that Cervantes' comedy, like Cugel-type comedy, is on the outside, while Chrétien's comedy, like the comedy in *Ports of Call*, is on the inside. When Perceval decants his kissing lesson to the maid, it may be a laugh-line, but it is too complex not to be more. Perceval is glad to use his half-learned lesson to justify doing what he wants to do; he presents, to himself, his abuse of the maid as a lawful obligation. But he fails to consider what the maid might like, and won't heed her pleas. Perceval is contradictory; he obeys the letter of the law while flagrantly violating its spirit. That is funny because humor is about things that don't fit. Perceval's error will eventually prove costly. He does not flaunt or sneer at what is right. He does wrong, out of ignorance, or incompleteness, or because he has not yet learned to open his heart. His story is absurd and tragic, amusing and pathetic. As it continues, episode after episode, through adventures of the mind, the heart, the body and the soul, adventures crude, mysterious, glorious or terrible, Perceval awakens to deeper understanding. His nature becomes more and more refined. He 'develops' as the lit. crit. crowd would say, in an 'arc of character'.

In *Ports of Call* Vance deploys a grand manner which, if it resembles anything, resembles a marriage of Cervantes and Chrétien de Troyes. Dame Hester, for example, is simultaneously ridiculous and affecting. Her absurdity is no more in the foreground than the mortal anxiety with which she plays a frantic game of hide and seek. Wingo's silly artistic pretensions are the other side of the coin of his sensitivity to the spirits of time, the zeitgeists of the here and now. Schwatzendale's *superbe* forces our admiration as much as his posturings and cruelties are laughable or repulsive. Maloof's maunderings are as lugubrious as the tragic sense of life which inspires them is compelling.

And Myron? No bland Everyman, he is the essential vancian hero. With him Vance hits the mark he set out for himself in the 1940s. Kirth Gersen, Adam Reith or Glawan Clattuc are more nuanced than the typical American action hero, and yet they are not quite the ideal vancian hero, who is yet more modest and clumsy. On the other hand such heroes as Robert Smith, Tony LeGrand, Dover Spargill or John Milke fall a bit, to coin a phrase, 'under the top'. More balanced characters — in a strictly vancian sense — such as the chaotist Luke Grogatch or the technocrat Milton Hack, are yet a bit too far to the left; while a Glinnis Hulden or a Roy Barch, in similar manner, fall a bit too much to the right. Myron Tany strikes the just vancian note. He is the perfect vancian 'hero' of the perfect vancian story; a real person's adventure of reality — in which 'reality' is understood in the vancian sense, or the ensemble of phenomena including the most mysterious. Like Jaro Fath he is a 'hero' only if the adjective 'vancian' is used. In any other context Jaro, and Myron even more, would indeed seem so ordinary as to be bland. Nor are they traditional 'protagonists' for, in both books, and in typical vancian fashion, a constellation of other characters, at various points, take on as much or more importance than they.

Myron, let us say, is a perfect vancian vehicle. His subtle polychrome may be invisible to those whose perceptions are too dull to be stimulated by anything less than stark primary colors, but to sensitive readers Myron is a worthy pendant to Perceval and Don Quixote. Dazzled by romantic dreams, like Perceval and Don Quixote, Myron throws himself into adventures. Jaro, to say nothing of Glawen, Aillas or Cugel, is motivated by external stimuli. Myron is the perfect expression of that vancian essence, the Winged Being reaching for the Fruit of the Tree of Life. Like Perceval, Myron has boyish charm but also the moral hardness or insensitivity of youth. He is not ferocious, but probably more ready to nourish revenge in his heart than understanding or forgiveness. Of his companions Wingo is the most kind-hearted. But without going as far as Wingo's sometimes maudlin attitudes, *Ports of Call* is rife with touches of tenderness which cast into subtle contrast Myron's boyish coldness:

Berard and Sonssi marched to the door where they turned to stand in postures of formal decorum. Maloof and Myron paid them no heed, and began to arrange their belongings. Berard spoke. "Sirs, we have done our best to serve you. If we have failed, then we deserve no gratuity."

"Aha!" said Maloof. "All is now clear." He gave dinkets to each, which the children accepted politely but without enthusiasm and departed.

(At Pengelli on Coro-Coro)

Night Lamp is a book which seems to stand half-way between the classic vancian novels and that innovation, the culmination of a lifetime: *Ports of Call*. In the latter Vance tells, at last, the story he was made to tell. The magical forest of Tantrevalles, which he dreamed of dramatizing as a child, in *Ports of Call* becomes the whole universe, a place where each banal event is a thing of wonder, where

the ensemble of experience becomes story, a seamless web of marvellous adventure stretching from the microcosm of the soul to the macrocosm of the 'picturesque figures in the landscape'. The dozens of episodes which comprise *Ports of Call* fall into several categories. Some are directly related to one of the various superficial 'plot-threads'. Others are, or seem, totally independent, of which there are seven major cases.* The last of these occurs at Organon, on the planet Archembal. Vance introduces this event in the following passage:

At Organon, Captain Maloof and his crew encountered circumstances which shocked and surprised them to an inordinate degree, making their visit memorable; although the Glicca *had first put into Chancelade on Avente, where events no less significant occurred.*

I will make no allusion to the event 'no less significant' of Chancelade (which terminates one of the 'sub-plot threads') other than to say that color-blind readers will find it, to the contrary, as without significance, as lacking in surprise, and as *non*-memorable-to-an-inordinate-degree as they will find what occurs on Archembal. The latter event occurs at the Blue Urn tavern and unfolds thus:

A tall gray-haired waiter of stately demeanor wearing formal garments of impeccable cut approached the table. He bowed slightly as if to acknowledge their status as off-worlders, and so entitled to sympathetic understanding. He spoke in a nicely modulated voice: "Gentlemen, may I enquire your wishes?"

"You may indeed," said Maloof. "We have worked up a thirst! You may bring us your premium bitter ale, in large tankards."

The waiter smilingly shook his head. "We offer no libation of this sort, sir."

"Oh?" demanded Maloof. "What are the gentlemen yonder drinking with such gusto?"

The waiter politely turned to look. "Of course! They are enjoying our premium Mark Twelve Special, which, for a fact, is my own favorite."

"In that case," said Maloof, "you may bring me a tankard of the Mark Twelve Special."

The others gave the same instruction, and the waiter departed to fill the orders. He presently returned with four tankards which he deftly served around the table, and then withdrew.

Maloof took up his tankard. "For want of a better toast, I salute the ten thousand generations of brewmasters who, through their unflagging genius, have, in effect, made this moment possible!"

"A noble toast," cried Wingo. "Allow me to add an epilogue. At the last moments of the universe, with eternal darkness converging from all sides, surely someone will arise and cry out: 'Hold back the end for a final moment, while I pay tribute to the gallant brewmasters who have provided us a pathway of golden glory down the fading corridors of time!' And then, is it not possible that a bright gap will appear in the dark, through which the brewmasters are allowed to proceed, to build a finer universe?"

"It is as reasonable as any other conjecture," said Schwatzendale. "But now!" The four saluted each other, tilted their tankards, and drank deep draughts.

At this instant, Maloof felt that bewildering shock of surprise which would never vanish from his memory. He slowly raised his head and stared at the waiter, who came inquiringly forward. "Sir?"

In a low passionless voice, Maloof asked: "What is this liquid you have served us, when we called for beer?"

The waiter spoke feelingly: "Sirs, you were served our best barley-water!"

"Barley-water!" cried Maloof huskily.

"Exactly so, I did you a kindness! Alcohol is highly toxic; its use is interdicted on Archimbal."

Schwatzendale asked in a hushed voice: "There is neither beer, nor ale to be had in Organon?"

"None at all."

The spacemen glumly paid the score and returned to the spaceport. An hour later the Glicca *departed Organon, and set off for the next port of call.*

Does this episode, like a stone in an arch, have a structural place in *Ports of Call*, or is *Ports of Call* like a sack of potatoes, and this episode, willy-nilly, just another potato? This question takes on special significance since it has been complained that *Ports of Call* is little more than a series of tavern visits. But what is life itself? Each night we go to bed, and each morning we rise. Day after day we do similar work, take regular meals, encounter the same folk. We run in circles from dawn to dusk. Our lives are a waltz of daily epicycles on a Grand Tour from dust to dust. Is *Ports of Call*s a recital of banality? Only to the color-blind. To those with the eyes of the Winged Being—those who can see, because they are looking, and looking

---

* 1: The history of Scopus and visit to the Refunctionary.
2: Wingo's antiquarian and mystic adventures at Felker's Landing.
3: The adventure of the Arct helmet, an object described by Tutter as a 'symbol of Destiny'.
4: The evening at Sonc Saloon, by Songerl Bay, in which Moncrief appears in disguise.
5: Negotiations and skullduggery at Port Palanctus.
6: The events at Mirsten including the story of the architect Riyban Trill, an artistic genius in a dynamic relationship with the law-abiding society of Falziel.
7: The metaphysical incident at the Blue Urn.

because they want to see where they are going, because they are going somewhere, because they seek something—*Ports of Call* is alchemical. The event at the Blue Urn is an eschatological* vision placed, with masterly precision, at the end of the ultimate vancian story.

Socrates often evoked the 'art of drinking wine'. The incident at the Blue Urn recounts an attempt at this philosophical art. As each human life ends in the disaster of death, this attempt ends in failure. There is nothing wrong with barley-water. Some people like it, and beer is not appreciated by everybody. Learning to enjoy beer might be called 'mastery of the art of drinking beer'. Beer and wine are ancient beverages with origins lost in the mists of pre-history. They have been adjuncts to feast and celebration from time immemorial. Tools of joy and thanksgiving, they are related to our sense of fate and religious feeling.

Drinking is not an ordinary act. It may justly be called a, or even 'the', basic existential gesture. No other act with the exception of breathing is so crucial to our existence. But breathing is peristaltic, or outside the domain of our conscious will. Drinking, therefore, is the most essentially human way we prolong our mortal being, the most important expression of our human freedom, by which we affirm, or reject, the most basic aspect of ourselves: our incarnation†. To choose to drink is the most direct, the most powerful, most real affirmation of life. The relation of libation to celebration is therefore more than traditional; it is a natural act of thanksgiving, a mystic offering to the mysterious power, whatever it might be, which accords us the marvellous privilege of our spark-like moment of sentience on the golden pathway of the fading corridors of time. To master drinking is to become conscious, or to live in a higher sense. When life is more than mineral prolongation, it can become a thing of golden glory.

The crew of the *Glicca*, in their pursuit of lurulu, have advanced well in the art of drinking, but they have more to learn. The perfect master of this art would have delighted at the grand surprise offered them at the Blue Urn: the miracle of beer transformed into barley-water. Their art, however, is not negligible. Before tasting a drop they were already spiritually exalted and had praised, and given thanksgiving, in proper terms, to the mystery of life.

2

COMMENTS ON COMMENTS

Chrétien de Troyes' begins *Perceval le Gallois* with the following lines:

Qui petit seme petit quialt,	*Who little sows little reaps,*
et qui auques recoillir vialt	*And who great harvests wants*
an tel leu sa semance espande	*In such a place his seed doth spread*
que fruit a cent dobes li rande;	*That fruit one hundred fold it gives;*
car en terre qui rien ne vaut	*For in earth which nothing is worth*
bone semance i seche et faut.	*Good seed doth dry and fail.*
Chrétïens seme et fet semance	*Chrétïens plants and makes give seed*
d'un romans que il ancomance,	*A novel which he so begins,*
et si le seme en si bon leu	*And sows in such a goodly place*
qu'il ne puet estre sanz grant preu,	*That without great profit it cannot be;*
qu'il fet por le plus prodome	*This he does for that greatest noble*
qui soit an l'empire de Rome :	*Who is in the empire of Rome:*
c'est li cuens Philipes de Flandres,	*The count Philippe of Flanders,*
qui mialx valt ne fist Alixandres,	*Who is worth more than was Alexander,*
cil que l'en dit qui tant fu buens	*Of whom it is said he was so good.*

The poem continues, pointing out that Alexander was not as good as they say.

I quote this passage for the indication it gives concerning the relation of art and audience. If a work of art falls on blind eyes or deaf ears it withers and dies. Vast treasures have disappeared thus. The Taliban, making a virtue of their blindness, blew up the colossi of Qumran. But energetic human mischief is the least of art's enemies; worse is tepid indifference or stale incomprehension. Only a few fragments of Praxiteles escaped the road makers and lime burners, a fact which seizes the heart like an icy hand from the void. There are famous lists of written works that have been lost. But what of the masterpieces beyond all record, beyond all memory? Of these we can only fantasize. When the last scrap of art is gone, when the last human spirit capable of dreaming of its glories returns to the ultimate dust, it will all be over at last. To the greatest degree possible this terrible moment should be delayed; may it never touch our own lives or the lives of those we love.

The VIE has done as much as possible to protect Vance's work from the fate of, say, the *Love Songs of Aristophenes*, Thucidides' commentary on

* Eschatology: the study of finality, or 'last things'.

† literally: in-meatification'

Plato's *Banquet*, or the *War Journals of Alexander the Great*. As the decades continue to trundle past this will become clearer. Given the debased nature of mass products, printed paper dating from the fifties and sixties has often already passed the half-way mark on its pilgrimage to flake and dust. The Vance archives (never mind the house that contained them, or the folks in that house) nearly went up in smoke in the last great Oakland fire. A mere hundred yards separated the all devouring flames from a few cardboard boxes filled with paper. As for the Mugar Library in Boston, one day it may burn, or simply run out of money. But the VIE book set is only a tool. Even if the longevity of VIE volumes cannot be further enhanced, if the several hundred sets, spread around the world, do not remain in the hands of folk who understand what they have — I do not speak of VIE subscribers but of their inheritors, and the inheritors of their inheritors — wind, flood, fire and wood-mite will have the last word sooner, rather than later. By then Vance's work may already have been lost to memory, for the true locus of the life of art is the human soul.

It is therefore with a certain sadness that I note the lack-luster, thoughtless, and sometimes negative reception of *Lurulu*. The seed may be falling on poor earth.

Of the various reactions I have sampled the worst is one posted on the VanceBBS — premier Vance site on the internet. It compares *Lurulu* to *Candide* by Voltaire, high-prophet of atheistic rationalism, the theology of scientism. *Candide* is the story of a naïf romping though a world of atheistic rationalism. *Lurulu*, claims this critic, has a *discernible moral* which is *surprisingly Voltairian: neither idealistic self-abnegation nor accidental wealth bring peace and fulfillment to human mind*. It seems amazing that anyone would stuff *Ports of Call* into such a small box, but it explains how this critic can go on to call *Lurulu* a *tired ending* to *Ports of Call*. He complains that it only *brings the scant plot threads of "Ports" to their disparate conclusions — sort of*; what counts in *Lurulu* is *not plot* but *a farewell kaleidoscope of Jack's favorite planet-vistas*. These *become noticeably bleaker and sketchier at the end.* The critic claims that *Lurulu's* theme is *a search for the nature of human happiness, fulfillment and destiny, which is shown to be quite futile. The best thing in life is, Vance concludes, a relative isolation of a small group of the detached observers of life, preferably well-heeled, in the constant state of mental, emotional, and physical escape.* So 'accidental wealth' does not bring fulfillment to the mind but being 'well-heeled', presumably by 'non-accidental' means, does not hurt? Whatever the case the critic characterizes this result as 'dismal', and pretends that, for Vance, life 'is not unlike an onion of delusions: the more you peel them, the more you cry, and in the end there's nothing.' Ouch! On technical points the critic finds the book riddled with faults: *anticlimactic, overly schematic, too founderous, even unconvincing* [. . .] *lacking in novelty, in engrossing situations and in well-shaped, likable characters.* Furthermore the *descriptions of alien landscapes and weird customs are devoid of their former vividness and conviction.* But since *Vance always had a penchant for the cold, somewhat frustrating touch of reality in the last paragraphs of his books* [perhaps *Lurulu*] *serves well as one large, cold, somewhat frustrating conclusion to all of his life's work.* On a positive note, at least with regard to recruiting Vance into a program of proselytizing for extreme scientism, *Lurulu* makes *strong statements . . . against the ugliness and immorality of religion*. The critic then offers a global judgement: [Vance] *remains a humanist, a preacher of doubt and moderation, of reasonable kindness without mandatory compassion, of self-restraint without self-punishment, of minimizing the inevitable sufferings we all cause each other in order to survive*. Fair enough, as far as it goes, if one is willing to deform and shrink Vance into an ideologue, which the critic does, calling these elements 'wise'. In one of those abuses of biography for which the 20th century has been so scandalously culpable, the critic pretends that *Lurulu's* alleged weaknesses are a consequence of *the substandard milieu* [Vance] *must lean upon and endure*. Not Vance but his family and friends are at fault for the poor quality of *Lurulu*. One wonders why this same milieu has not degraded the work from the beginning.

I would not mention this viciousness had it not, a) been allowed on the VanceBBS, and b) had it not received a certain amount of favorable reaction there — notably *not* including a swift and sharp retort from Koen Vyverman, the VIE's own 'Laughing Mathematician'. Others, however, characterized these views as 'fair' or 'insightful'. A certain 'Jojo' was even enthusiastic: [the critic in question] *is one the very few who have ever even attempted to say something insightful about Vance's work — I mean, something other than that 'Jack Vance is a master creator of exotic alien worlds'*. And yet is this not exactly the sort of tedious remark in which the critic traffics with 'kaleidoscope of planet-vistas' and 'descriptions of alien landscapes and weird customs'? Jojo continues: [the critic in question] *strikes me as Vance's staunchest admirer, even to the point of overlooking some of Vance's more obvious failings as an author.**

Other *Lurulu* commentary on the Vance BBS has been more indulgent, if variously tepid, wide-of-the-mark or

* The moderator of the Vance BBS accuses 'Jojo' of being 'Pulsifer', a personage accused by others of being the critic in question himself. One can only hope these speculations are correct. That the critic in question approves of himself can hardly be a cause of sad surprise.

evasive. One poster comments: *Overall, I found the novel* [. . .] *lacking in narrative tension*. In contrast David B. Williams cites a certain Carl Hays, from 'Booklist':

Vance shows no sign of stinting either his impeccable style or storytelling mastery. This sequel to Ports of Call *continues the escapades of Myron Tany . . . During an apparently routine cargo run, the gang disembarks on the planet Fluter, where ship's captain Maloof enlists Tany in a perilous mission to track down con artist Tremaine . . . Fluter locals, however, have their own beef with Tremaine . . .*

David B. Williams' comment is to the point:

Positive, but in an effort to get a firm grip on something in Lurulu's *unconventionally structured form, he has seized on the most prominent embedded 'story' in order to summarize some kind of plot.*

Lurulu, it is to be feared, is not a regular story; it has no 'plot'. This inconvenient fact must either be frankly admitted, or excused. Thus the post of a certain David S:

. . . it's melancholy, it's mild, and it lacks 'narrative tension.' But who would have missed it? As a whole, Ports of Call/Lurulu *is a gentle and wistful little piece, compared with some of Vance's more ostentatious and flamboyant works, but the true Vance voice is there.*

Not great; a 'little piece', but Vance none-the-less! David B. Williams himself, troubled as I am by this matter, attempts a variant excuse:

My concern is for new readers, who will pick up Lurulu*, find it baffling because of its unconventional nature, and not give JV's many other works a trial. If the Vance oeuvre is a 50-course meal,* Lurulu *isn't a good appetizer, it's the cigar and brandy.'*

'Cigar and brandy'; better, perhaps, than 'little piece'. Matt Hughes invents another strategy; *Lurulu* as therapeutic philosophy:

. . . it's a story that reveals a truth that is no less profound for being simple: life is a voyage whose significance is in the going, not in the arrival.

So far, so good, but will I enjoy reading the darn thing? Matt's further remarks would appear conclusive:

Myron and his shipmates have discovered that their lurulu is not some far place to be located nor yet some abstruse state of being to be achieved through arduous pilgrimage over sharp flints and around the rim of a red hot volcano. It is here and now, in the saloon of the Glicca*, in taverns where the bitter ale is potent and the Ponchoo Punch lives up to its name, in the unique sunsets of a thousand far flung worlds. So the tale is not about a beginning, a middle and an end, connected by an arc of character, but is instead a celebration and an urging to live this fleeting moment to the full. Not story, but wisdom.*

No beginning. No middle. No end. No character. No story. Yikes! So what the heck is it? Another poster, if well meaning, like Hache Mancour defending Rhialto only makes matters worse:

I don't think that Lurulu *is a bad book: far from it. I do think that it has to be approached for what it is, and on its own terms it is in fact a very fine work . . . I feel in the novel Vance's awareness of his own mortality* [It] *is full of familiar themes . . . In general, events go with surprising smoothness. The severe pilgrimage is avoided. Indeed, the innkeepers are generally reasonable in their demands.*

A twilight wallow in the author's personal problems; a rehash of old stuff, as smooth as putty, without adventure or drama. With raves like this who needs pans?
Fudge the problem as you like; fictional works are, and must be, stories, and stories are accounts of stuff that happens to characters and what they do. If the story (or 'plot') is tedious or, even worse, fails to exist, and if the characters are bland, boring or unconvincing, a book is not worth bothering about.

Far be it from me to claim *Ports of Call* is a masterpiece if it is not! No one is paying me to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the VIE, and the eventual massive renown which I predict, and toward which I am working for Vance will not — unfortunately — put a single dinket in my hungry pockets. It is just my honest opinion that these critics have it wrong. Others come closer to satisfying me. Patrick Dusoulier likes *Lurulu* 'very much', finds it 'very moving', and calls it 'subtle', statements I endorse. Rob Friefeld, like me, emphasizes story, or 'what happens':

Lurulu *is, of course, about 'lurulu' which I take to be that ungraspable element in most of Vance's serious work. Life is not about its ending, which is generally no great surprise, but about what happens on the way there.*

Steve Sherman helpfully comments on the problem of the split between *Ports of Call* and *Lurulu*:

. . . I found Ports of Call *a disappointment on first reading, because I thought it a complete self-contained novel, just as* Night Lamp *had been. One reads a book differently when one knows there is more to come. My second reading, a couple of years later, with the benefit of correct expectations, increased my appreciation by an order of magnitude.*

He goes on to offer some proper praise:

. . . I love it. I find it to be vintage Vance, containing all those elements that have appealed to me over the years. I rank it as being at least the equal of the Cadwal Chronicles or Night Lamp*, and just a bit below the masterpiece that is* Lyonesse.*

I am aware of what have been described as its blemishes: the lack of plot, the shift of the central role from Myron to Maloof, the perfunctory tying up of loose ends, etc., etc. I am not bothered by any of it and don't entirely agree with the characterizations anyway. I do not find that Myron ceases to be the main character, even while Maloof's role in the action increases. I find that the 'plot' — and this is a particularly vancian trick — is Myron's personal development, the thread that extends through each of the episodes and that concludes with his decision to return to the Glicca*.*

Nor do I buy that the tying up of loose ends is perfunctory. Rather each scene seems to me to be perfectly calculated — of course I feel the same way about the war at the end of Madouc*, which I also didn't need to be any longer than it is. The Mouse Riders' final performance is one of the funniest things Vance ever wrote and the visit to Tibbet is right behind it. And what more did he need to do with the pilgrims than he did?*

It is a story. It is about what happens. It is as funny, as wistful, as gripping, as exciting and thought provoking as anything else in Vance.

Finally, David B. Williams makes a point about the book's structure:

. . . The Cugel double novel (I count the two works as one big story with a double circular plot), while so episodic that it first appeared as individual stories, nonetheless has a very solid spine — the urgent and often expressed desire of Cugel to return to Almery and avenge himself upon Iucounu if possible. This plot device is fulfilled in very satisfactory ways, twice.

I guess my one regret re: PoC/L is that it doesn't have a bit more spine.†

3

THE STRUCTURE OF *PORTS OF CALL*

Ports of Call, I say, has a structure at once monumental and intricate. How to grasp it? To begin, we might simply list of the ports of call:

1 - Lilling and Salue Sain, on VERMAZEN at Dianthe.
2 - Flajaret, on DIMMICK at Maudwell's Star.
3 - Port Tanjee, on TAUBRY at Vanjeli.
4 - Duhail, on SCROPUS at Tacton's Star.
5 - Dulcie Diver, Sholo and Mel, on TERCE at Bran.
6 - Girandole and Sweetfleur, on FIAMETTA at Kaneel Verd.
7 - Songerl Bay, Felker's Landing and Cambria, on MARIAH at Pfitz Star.
8 - Coro-Coro town, Krenk and Pengelly, on CORO-CORO at Franetta.
9 - Port Palactus, on STAR HOME at Mireille.
10 - Cax, on BLENKINSOP at Moulder.
11 - Falziel, on MIRSTEN.
12 - Chancelade, on AVENTE.
13 - Organon, on ARCHIMBAL.
14 - *Return to Coro-Coro.*

---

* A statement that must be understood in light of Steve's unconditional love of Lyonesse, of which he was the TI wallah.

† Having finished this essay I note, with satisfaction, that the aggregate tone of internet reaction to *Lurulu* has improved by several degrees thanks to the postings of a certain 'Rolling Bear I' on the VanceBBS, a few of whose apt remarks I take pleasure in quoting here. Responding to some of 'Jojo Lapin's' sour chirps, 'Rolling Bear' responds:

Hare, your appraisal exemplifies my theory that the book is a mirror of the creature who reads it. . . I can only shake my head in pity at those who find it weak or unfulfilling, or some kind of sub-effort meant only for "cultists"—as one confused reader put it. . . I do not recommend [Lurulu] *for those who would pigeon-hole Vance with their own expectations of what sort of thing they would like to see him write.*

I'm finding Lurulu *to be lilting and profound. . . it is a wonderful book. I am enamored of the picture it presents. . . one of my favorite Vances. . . it shows Jack's continual growth as an artist and human being, reflecting the kind and gentle light he began demonstrating with* Night Lamp*. Also, it does not, as an oblivious reader stated* [who quotes Jack out of context in order to fit his own misguided theories] *reinforce Jack's atheism; instead, it indicates that Jack has become less reflexively dogmatic about important philosophical issues. The book is not a rehashing of old themes or a tired rephrasing by an author at his end, but rather a brilliant distillation of all the elements that are Vancean, carried forward in surprising ways. The dialogue crackles! New words have been coined! The story is riveting! . . . Applause for Jack with this beautiful new effort,* Lurulu*. And from me, Jack, I say "Thank you," because the book is making me feel great. . .*

This is more like it! My only quibble would be that I do not find any of Vance's work, early or late, reflexively dogmatic about important philosophical issues, or little ones either. Naturally, on such a question, honest men may differ; I would be curious to see this thesis argued with examples.

15 - Impy's Landing, on KYRIL.

16 - Trajence, on NAHARIUS (a.k.a. 'Kodaira')

17 - *Return to Port Tanjee.*

18 - Duvray, on ALCYDON.

19 - *Return to Salou Sain.*

20 - *Departure for unknown destination.**

We have something similar to *Cugel the Clever*: the hero leaves on a journey, and returns, then begins a new journey. But if *Cugel the Clever* is a series of loosely related episodes, *Ports of Call* is a single tightly woven rich fabric, a *jacquard francais*. This cannot be simply demonstrated because the peculiar unity of *Ports of Call* rests on a web-like complexity of themes, counter themes and variations, with, as weft and woof, a set of paradoxes energizing the whole. If these are keyed, as Steve Sherman states, to *Myron's personal development, the thread that extends through each of the episodes and concludes with his decision to return to the* Glicca, there is much more involved — as Steve would surely concede!

Let us approach the question step by step, beginning with what is most apparent. The theme is clear. In one of the most pungently concentrated yet characteristically light-handed of his neologisms, Vance defines it as 'lurulu'. Restated, the theme is mortality, or the implications of death for the awakened life. This is announced, restated, emphasized and expanded throughout the story. The initial statement occurs at the very beginning.

His parents stipulate that Myron should *concentrate with full diligence upon his studies*, for *scholastic achievement was highly important when a person prepared for a career. But Myron cannot put aside images of majestic space-packets sliding through the void, of cities redolent with strange smells, of taverns open to the warm winds where dusky maidens in purple skirts served foaming toddy in carved wooden beakers*. Myron, like the rest of us, is faced with a life-choice and torn by good reasons to choose one, or another, of the lives he might live. Whichever choice he makes will limit him, a foretaste of that final limit to life which is death.

This dour aspect of the theme remains dissimulated, or only suggested, in the first section, but is emphasized (or hinted at with more insistence) in the second. Though no longer young, Dame Hester defines herself as *a youthful spirit* who *defies the years*. In the contrast between what she is and how she insists on seeing herself, or constraining others to see her, or pretend to see her, she resembles Kokor Hekkus. Dame Hester is violently attached not so much to the pleasures of life, as to a vision of herself as a person in the *verve of youth*, a woman of *vivid beauty*. Kokor Hekkus is also not addicted to mere existence but to another kind of vivid experience, which compels him to construct a fantasy world in which he lives a dramatic history of his own confection. Dame Hester also constructs a fantasy world, an ecstatic illusion. Kokor Hekkus purchases his prolonged vitality at the price of horror. Dame Hester purchases her illusion of prolonged vitality at the price of a dangerous vulnerability. Imposing their own standards upon life, both these characters cut themselves off from its true riches, which are mysterious and therefore unexpected.

When Dame Hester falls victim to a youth-elixir scam, Myron, in his youthful self-involvement, sees a personal opportunity. He rejects his financial studies and works to assure himself a place on the crew of the *Glodwyn*. In particular he must prove that Dauncy Covarth, who victimizes Dame Hester's weakness, is faithless. This done, Myron becomes captain of the *Glodwyn*, a post only as sure as the vagaries of Dame Hester's hysterical battle against mortality and tenacious ignorance of the true riches of life. At the very first port of call, in blind self-indulgence, Dame Hester finds a new Dauncy Covarth, in the person of Marko Fassig, and at the third port of call Myron is put off the ship.

Dame Hester, however, is not a monster; she:

. . . allowed him suf ficient funds to buy his passage home to Vermazen. . . ". . . you were given your chance, but you failed miserably! You quite lost touch with reality. You are a dreamer, an allegorist and — dare I say? — something of a moon-calf. My advice is this: return to your home; study another four years at the Institute, then go to work with your father at the Exchange. That, so I believe, is your métier, and where you will earn whatever success life has to offer you."

Tasting the *success life has to offer*, or the search for that success, is related to lurulu. Our mortality will kill us, but it is the price of tasting the delights of life — but what are these so called delights? Dame Hester's ideas in this regard are surely wrong.

Myron's adventure on Tanjee is a sort of crisis, the gravity of which Myron is only partly aware. His situation is now precarious, as Vance instantly and persistently makes clear:

* Some other places mentioned but not visited: Lorca on SANSEVERE, Glame on SUSSEA; Croy, on NEW HOPE; First Camp, on WELTERS; Ocean City, on LAVENDRY; Port Pallas on TRAN; Maloof's home: Traven on MORLOCK; Maloof's IPCC postings: Olfane on SIGIL 92, and Wanne on DUSA; the town in the Beyond where Maloof captured the *Glicca*: Serafim; home planet of Flook, Pook and Snook: NUMOY; home city of the settlers of Coro-Coro: Coreon on ERGARD; as well as various towns not visited such as Zemerle, on Fiametta.

Myron noticed a uniformed offcial, middle-aged, extremely neat and erect, standing about fifty feet away. He seemed interested in Myron and his conduct.

This official informs Myron:

". . . of certain local regulations, with which you should become familiar. We are an orderly folk at Port Tanjee. Our off-world visitors naturally follow the same rules."

One false move and Myron might end up marooned at Tanjee, trapped in an unfavorable situation. This is what happens to Hilmar Krim. If Myron, and not Krim, had been unlucky, Myron might have come bitterly to regret his choice in favor of space travel. But Myron persists, with as much caution and boldness as he can muster, and fate generously offers him a new opportunity; at the Owlswyck Inn he encounters the crew of the *Glicca**, and a new way forward opens up.

With typical vancian lightness the evolutions at Tanjee dramatize the grave consequences of life choices. Tanjee is a labyrinth but so is any society, because life itself is a labyrinth. If Myron had married Angela and gone into banking he might have found himself confronted with adventures and dilemmas just as pressing.

Now, however, Myron has found a set of congenial companions, who accompany him through the rest of his adventures, and who even have adventures of their own. What do they and their adventures have to do with the story's theme, or its structure? How are they part of the one story that is *Ports of Call*?

Isel Wingo and Fay Schwatzendale each use a distinct personal philosophy, or outlook, and command a high degree of self-reflectiveness. Myron, by contrast, is an unreflective youth. His outlook is confined to a hazy and uninformed desire to travel. He is at the beginning of his life. He is struggling to make his first choices. The others are living the consequences of, or are already formed by choices made. Like roads they have chosen to follow such choices impose limits on them but also give them special strengths. Fay lacks Wingo's sensitive qualities, but Wingo lacks Fay's decisive powers. Wingo rides on the wings of time; he dreams into the past and the future. He is gifted with 'universal empathy'. Fay is a maestro of effectiveness in the present. A conversation at the Glad Song Tavern underlines the qualities of each crew member:

. . . Schwatzendale and Wingo were discussing the Glicca *and the aspirations which, so Wingo asserted, motivated each member of the crew.*

Schwatzendale refused to take the idea seriously. He defined 'aspirations' as a mild form of dementia, to which he, at least, was immune. "Aspirations are bleary-eyed hopes for the future, smeared over with honey and dead flies. As for me, I live on the curling crest of the moment! The past is a cemetery of regrets and second thoughts, the future is a wilderness."

"Never have I heard such nonsense," *declared Wingo. "At least, not since your last harangue.*"

"I bring you truth," *announced Schwatzendale grandly. "Time and existence both lack dimension! Life is real only during that instant known as 'Now'. Surely that is clear!*"

"Oh, it is clear enough," *scoffed Wingo. "You cite the most limpid banalities as if they were cosmic truths. For an unsophisticated person the effect might be startling.*"

Schwatzendale peered sidewise at the complacent Wingo. "You may or may not intend a compliment."

Wingo shrugged. "I feel only that it is a wasted man indeed who lives without a spiritual focus, or who fritters away his dreams [. . .]"

. . . "Enough theorizing!" *cried Schwatzendale. "Be real! Prove something! Start with Captain Maloof; where are his aspirations?*"

Wingo rubbed his pink chin. "In all candor, he has never discussed such subjects. Still, my intuition tells me that he is searching — for something or someone; that he lives in hope of fulfilling his quest."

. . . "He seeks something lost which must be found. That is the nature of a quest."

. . . [Schwatzendale:] *". . . Do you also admit to aspirations? Or are they secret, like those of Captain Maloof?*"

Wingo chuckled. "Nothing about me is secret, as you well know. My goals are simple. I want to live at peace with myself and in harmony with the universe. That is all."

"These are rather insipid objectives," *said Schwatzendale. "Still, they are simple and probably harmless.*"

Wingo sighed. "Myron is not yet a cynic. He will be proud to affirm the aspirations which guide his life."

"I will answer for him," *said Schwatzendale. "He has two principal aspirations. First, he wants to violate the landlord's innocent daughter. Next, he wants to return to the* Glicca *wearing his own pelt. Otherwise, Myron is a spaceman and a vagabond, without a care in the world.*"

Wingo and Schwatzendale represent two basic attitudes. The role of Maloof is of a different order. He and Myron

---

* At the Owlswyck Inn Krim falls between the cracks of a cultural misunderstanding. The menace of such a misstep at Tanjee is emphasized again and again. For example, this line which ends the girl-watching passage:

Oh well, thought Myron, even if I wanted to, I'd never dare to say 'Boo', for fear of a day in the cage; or worse, finding myself married.

stand at the near and far side of a fate which all men, to one degree or another, must suffer; the problem of guilt. To put this another way: as a pair they point to the problem of morality.

The voyage of the *Glicca* eventually carries Myron back to Vermazen. There, in the second to last paragraph of the book, and for the first time, Myron engages in self-conscious reflection. Unlike the self-reflections of Maloof, Wingo and Schwatzendale — and Moncrief — which have been detailed for the reader, the content of Myron's choice is not made explicit. What is clear is that Myron's outlook is now formed. In particular it has taken on a 'tragic shade'. Myron has grown into the master of his fate. He is no longer dependant upon his aunt and his parents. Whatever the profound nature of his choice, it is mature, and therefore neither easy nor without pain:

Myron remained alone at Sarbiter House, thinking dismal thoughts.

This is different from his original thoughtless eagerness. What is dismal is not Myron's situation, which as now as favorable as he could possibly hope. Myron's soul is enriched, or burdened, by strata of experience and knowledge deposited by his adventures and his companions. Vance need not go into the details. The fundamentals have already been revealed. The story is now over. Myron's choice may be good or bad. That is not the point. He has plunged with full consciousness into his own mortality. He is fully alive.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE IS NEVER OBVIOUS . . . !
Joss Garwig [in reproach to Tibbet]

The theme of *Ports of Call* is marked not only at the beginning and end, but also at the center:

Moncrief remained in his chair, reviewing the events of the day. They brought him no cheer. Uncertainties lurked wherever he looked. And meanwhile, the worst enemy of all, the great colossus Time, loomed ever taller over his mental landscape. The years were advancing; there was no turning them back. Moncrief winced and sat up in the chair. This sort of rumination must be avoided. True: he was no longer a nimble young bravo but his mental capacity had declined no whit! He was as clever, subtle and audacious as ever — but, if truth must be told, he had gone soft and lazy! Still, and on the other hand, could he not trace his tendency toward ease and self-indulgence to the advent of years? Was he supposed to be an acrobat and turn cartwheels for the rest of his days? Surely not. What then? The answer was plain. He must revitalize his temperament, now that youthful organs no longer pumped quick reactions and surges of stimulation into his blood.

*"Rumplety-bang and a yo-heave-ho! Kick down the valve and away we go!" sang Moncrief under his breath. No more of this maundering. Despite all, he was Moncrief the Mage, the same Marcel Moncrief who had elevated mouse-riding to the status of a fine art!**

The story revolves around this central statement of the mortality-theme like the Tanjecterly worlds revolve upon Twitten's Post. The story elements are like interconnected worlds, sometimes prolonging each other, sometimes overlapping. The result for those who attempt to discern it, may at first seem a formless patchwork of incident. This elusiveness is a mark of Vance's artistry. Reading the book is apparently simple and undemanding. The author does not thrust a machine upon us. His elaborate fabrication is presented is a modest picaresque experience, a casual promenade.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

". . . SURELY, OTHER ROUTES EXIST WHICH MAY BE EVEN MORE PRACTICAL. WHY NOT FARE TO CORO-CORO DIRECTLY? OR EVEN BETTER, MAKE AN INSTANT SWING OUT TO IMPY'S LANDING, THEN WHIRL ABOUT IN A GALLANT ROUNDABOUT SWEEP TO CORO-CORO? THAT, SO I BELIEVE, IS THE OPTIMUM SOLUTION! . . ."
[The Pilgrims to Maloof, after leaving Scropus]

As Moncrief's self-reflection is the thematic center, what might be called the conceptual center of the story is the destination of the Pilgrims: the planet Kyril.† Like Morreion's circumambulation of the 'world at the end of the universe', the pilgrimage of Kyril is a circular trek around the circumference of that planet. This circle, or cycle, is the innermost of all the epicycles inside that

* Certainly we are in the presence of the author's own inner conversation as he struggled, for seven long years, and during what must inevitably be some of the last years of his life, with *Lurulu*. Moncrief exits the stage of the story at Chancelade, an event recounted in a most quiet manner, and in Moncrief's own writing, though it is described as a 'memorable shock'.

The above passage is also a haunting recollection of the famous passage at page 25 of *Wyst*. *Wyst* was written in 1974, thirty years after Vance's first published work, and thirty years before the publication of *Lurulu*.

† Kyril is mentioned in 5 different chapters and 39 times. The only planet mentioned more often (69 times) is Coro-Coro. Coro-Coro is the locale of Maloof's story, the longest and central adventure of the story as a whole, a struggle with, or meditation upon guilt. It may also be mentioned that the name 'Kyril' recalls 'Keyril', a demon from The *Miracle Workers*. The linkage of ideas is not direct, but is obvious enough: the dark metaphysics of the unknown.

gallant roundabout sweep which begins at Vermazen, goes from port of call to port of call, and ends, at last, back at Vermazen. Like the pilgrims after their pilgrimage* Myron, having made his pilgrimage, is transformed.

Between these inner and outer circles are epicycles: characters, situations and events which seem to swirl around, sometimes repeating, but always with variation. The tavern visits, the photographic expeditions, the gambling games, the promenades down Pomare Boulevard, Maloof's narrations of his troubles, the tripartite manner of speaking of Flook, Pook and Snook:

"It is far too tiresome," Flook told him. "Not at all in our style!"

"It is even a bit grotesque," said Pook. "What will you demand of us next?"

Snook gave a little shudder. "As to that, I would not care to speculate."

The clowns from River Isle, the Scarbush Lorrakees and Futin Putos, are all similar bands of dangerous thugs-artists. Dame Hester and Madam Maloof are both foolish old women. The serving girl at the Glad Song Tavern and Tibbet Garwig are both love interests for Myron (with Buntje as a comic counter-example). There is the parade of port agents, each with office, desk, communication device, but much difference of style. Or the waiters, bartenders and innkeepers: Flodis of the Green Star Inn, Jodel of The Three Feathers, Ugo Teybald of the Iron Crow, etc., right up to the *tall gray-haired waiter of stately demeanor* of the Blue Urn.

Variations on a theme is the basic structure of jazz, and this aspect of the book is indeed formal*. These characters, situations or plot-lines are thematic melodies. The story is varied but coherent. This arrangement, however, is not gratuitous; no other structure would allow this particular story to be told. If Vance had merely marched a random set of characters through one adventure after another, until his imagination was exhausted or the exercise fatigued him, *Lurulu* would be a mere prolongation of another suite, fundamentally complete in itself, because essentially structureless. But the whole story was conceived before a word was written. There are some clear signs of this, like Wingo's feet. Their place in the story is only revealed at the end of chapter 11 of *Lurulu* when Schwatzendale spends two pages convincing Wingo to renounce the pilgrimage of Kyril:

. . . the way is especially hard on folk with sensitive feet, because of sharp flints in the road." Wingo stared down at his own delicate feet. "This makes for poor hearing," he told himself. "Still, it cannot be ignored!"

But Wingo has delicate feet the moment he is introduced at Port Tanjee. The writing of *Ports of Call* (counting both books) took nine years, with the first book published seven years before the second. It might be contended that the author gave Wingo delicate feet at random and then improvised chapter 11, after he had improvised chapter 10. But this ignores Wingo's place in the story, his meaning in relation to Myron. If his role is essential to the preparation of the story's ultimate event, the last line in the second to last paragraph of the book is not some super-cathartic experience justifying the whole book which would not function without this or that preparation. The sense of the story as a whole is ripened by its panoply of elements.

I STRIKE MY OWN PERSONAL PATH THROUGH THE WILDERNESS OF LIFE . . . !

Dame Hester

Myron seeks to live his desire. Dame Hester seeks to live hers. Myron and his aunt both reveal the book's theme, and both suffer the same fate. Myron learns of Dame Hester's disaster at Naharius, the second to last station of his pilgrimage, immediately followed by Alcydon, where his own disaster occurs. These two events, a positive example and a revelation of personal folly, are the prologue to the story's dénouement: Myron's mature choice.

Wingo wants the crew to make the pilgrimage of Kyril together. He renounces at the urging of a fellow crew member, preserving the integrity of the pilgrimage the *Glicca's* crew is already making, and drawing the reader's attention to the parallel. Wingo's dream is already being fulfilled. He is already on a pilgrimage with his dear companions, and at the end of their *gallant roundabout sweep* Myron has a 'spiritual enlightenment'.

Myron has been brave, and lucky. It has been a long, hard and dangerous circuit—just like the pilgrimage of Kyril. The sad fate of Dame Hester, like the calamity of Krim, brings Myron good fortune, but Myron might have found Dame Hester prospering on Naharius, after the manner of Dame Betka Ontwill—an anti-Dame Hester who shows how she might not have doomed herself. Or Krim might have escaped humiliation and left Myron trapped on

* as explicated by the remarkable Cuireg to Wingo, on the voyage from Coro-Coro to Kyril.

* I mean 'having to do with form' or shape, as opposed to content.

Tanjee. At Duvray, the last station of Myron's pilgrimage, Tibbet's faithlessness is discovered. The sentiment Myron nursed for so long reveals itself as foolishness—almost as foolish as his aunt's, for it was almost as obvious. Like his aunt, or Krim, Myron chased a chimera. Still, just as Dame Hester might have been sensible, Tibbet might have been true—in which case Myron might have found himself with a highly unsuitable wife. Tibbet's faithlessness, like Dame Hester's mania, or Krim's fantasies, turn out to be good luck for Myron. The dénouements at Trajence and Duvray are not mere tidy resolutions of improvised subplots. Myron has skirted the rim of the volcano.

We are all mortals, driven by desires, condemned to live life. Dame Hester dies well because she awakens to herself. If her life is shorter than it might have been, at least it ends in enlightenment and generosity rather than folly and selfishness. In any case, sooner or later, end it must. We do not learn Tibbet's final fate, but she too appears to be chasing the well-worn path of folly.

Well and good. We may admit that these elements, at least, fit together in some sort of integrated story. But there are other elements which seem to have no relation to anything: for example, what does the story of Captain Maloof's mother have to do with anything, besides being a variation on the story of Myron's aunt, an empty structural variation—with Orlo Cavke in the role of Marko Fassig, and Madam Maloof saved rather than dead?

To answer this we might first look at a similar, and apparently knottier question: the visit to Scropus, with the history of Imbald, the Refunctionary, and the urns of Wild Blue. Are these things not mere flourishes, without relation to anything else which, from a structural point of view, might as well have been tucked into the narrative at any point, or left out entirely?

We must delve into the entrails of the story.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Myron has two love interests.* Tibbet saves Myron's life, and then betrays him. The serving girl at the Glad Song tavern is exactly opposite: she tries to kill Myron, and Myron then murders (or betrays) her.

---

* There are others:

He remembered Rolinda, a dark-haired imp with long eyelashes who had played glissandos along the register of Myron's emotions. Then there was Berrens: incredibly lovely, with long honey-colored hair and the bluest of blue eyes; alas! She wrote arcane poetry and wanted Myron to tattoo a large staring eye in the center of his forehead, after the style of the Sufic Transvisionaries. But Berrens refused to decorate herself in like fashion, and the romance had collapsed. There had been Angela, adorable Angela, who had led Myron a mad chase, only to marry a wealthy fishmonger . . .

Myron caught her arm, bent her elbow and diverted its impetus, guiding it upward, so that she struck her own neck. Without conscious purpose, Myron pressed and the needle entered her flesh.

Myron would certainly have preferred events to have taken a very different direction:

". . . a captain will sometimes ship a pretty girl aboard to massage his back and keep his bed warm. It happens once in a while. Does the idea bother you?"

The girl thought a moment. "It would do me no permanent harm. I would not mind too much, if the captain were nice." She turned him a swift sidelong glance. "Are you the captain?"

Myron laughed. "If I were, you would be leaving aboard my ship tonight!

Even if it is in self-defense, Myron kills the girl. Ultimately this is a consequence of a selfish, if natural, desire to bed her, against Schwatzendale's clear-headed advice.

The 'love' scene between Myron and the tavern girl is long, tense and erotic. The death scene develops with a Cugelian heartlessness in which the disciple, Myron, is almost as bad as his cynical teacher, Schwatzendale:

. . . She felt the sting and gave a wild cry of utter desolation. Her arm relaxed; her hand went limp; Myron saw that the sac had gone flaccid.

The girl said in an incredulous voice: "You have killed me! I am dying!"

"It may be so. You should know better than I."

The girl whimpered. "I don't want to stare forever from a picture hanging on a wall!"

"That is what you wanted for me. I feel no pity; you have cost me ten sols."

"No, no, no! I took no money from you!"

"The effect is the same."

The girl's knees began to buckle. She wailed in terror: an eerie sound which thrilled along Myron's nerves.

The door swung open; Schwatzendale jerked sidewise into the room, head tilted, hand on his gun. He watched, grimly amused, as Myron carried the staggering girl to the bed, where she sprawled upon her back, staring at the ceiling.

"I came to save your life," said Schwatzendale.

"You are too late," said Myron. "I saved it for myself."

The two went to look down at the girl's lax body. She spoke in a half-whisper: "I am frightened! What will happen to me?"

"I think that you are about to die," said Schwatzendale. The girl's eyes closed. She grimaced, then her face relaxed.

"The upshot of all this is that you owe me ten sols," said Schwatzendale.

Myron nodded, slowly. "It is a debt I cannot evade." He looked to the chest of drawers, then crossed the room and opened the top drawer. From a tray he took the five sols he had given the girl, then took another ten sols from the tray, which he tendered to Schwatzendale. "This will cover the account, so I believe."

"Yes, why not? Money is money."

This is quite bad, but at least Myron is haunted by the horrendous event, a sentiment that begins only as they move away from the baleful influence of Terce. Looking down from the port of the departing *Glicca*, he:

. . . located the irregular roof of the Glad Song Tavern. Beneath that roof lay the body of the girl whose conduct even now seemed unreal.

Myron has been pitiless. The girl is a would-be murderer. Myron's gesture, if somewhat ambiguous, falls with fair comfort within the zone of self-defence.* In her final moment, however, her humanity is unambiguously revealed. Her previous criminal attitude, which reduced Myron to a mink, does not obliterate or nullify the surge of humanity which arises when she confronts her mortality face to face. At that moment she is not beyond the reach of pity. But, as if she were a noxious insect he had slapped, Myron withholds pity.

A surprising number of similar events occur on Terce. The Shuja and tanners of Mel are extremely dangerous. They murder for pelts as they breathe. Schwatzendale therefore takes no chances and posts Wingo with a Rupter:

". . . In the event of treachery and pelt-taking, Wingo will kill first the hetman, then he will destroy Mel and all the Meluli. Why are you laughing? You sneer? You do not believe me? That is easy to fix! Wingo, be so good as to demolish that ruined hut yonder."

Wingo pushed the red button at the side of the Ruptor and a tumble-down hut a hundred yards distant exploded into splinters of stone.

Both the hetman and the agent jerked back in shock. The hetman complained that the pelt of the old woman who lived in the hut had surely been damaged beyond repair. "It is a waste."

Wingo was crestfallen and said he was sorry, but Schwatzendale waved the incident aside. He spoke to the hetman: "As you can see, we are killers, plain and simple! We kill whomever annoys us, without remorse."

The hetman threw out his arms in a gesture of annoyance. "'Remorse'? What is that? Speak so that I understand you!"

When in Rome do as the Romans do. Schwatzendale uses local morality. Only Wingo who, unlike Schwatzendale, tends to see beyond the present moment to larger issues, retains a scrap of civilized perspective. In another incident it is Wingo himself who is the target of Tercian malfeasance, but again he demonstrates the largest attitude — if only by a narrow vancian margin:

Through the slit came a pair of scissors, then a gnarled hand, then a gaunt gray arm. The scissors cautiously closed upon the straps supporting Wingo's pouch. Maloof, standing to the side, noticed the operation. He seized the arm, heaved hard, and out from under the table tumbled an old woman with an enormous nose, straggling gray hair, gaunt arms and legs. She rolled out into the aisle, then, wheezing and groaning, tried to crawl away. Maloof whisked down his stick and struck her a smart blow on the back-side, then two more for good measure.

. . . "Madame, you should be ashamed of yourself! Your conduct is wicked and your language is vile. For punishment, I intend to confiscate your scissors."

"No! Never! Not my best Glitzers!"

"You should have thought of this before you tried to rob poor Wingo! Next time you will know better!" Maloof turned to his comrades. "Are we ready?"

The four returned up the aisle. The old woman hobbled in pursuit: hopping, skipping, shouting, reviling Maloof and all his works. Wingo, while pretending to adjust his cloak, created several 'mood impressions', which he later discovered to be striking. Maloof finally relented and placed the scissors down on the ground. The old woman scuttled forward, snatched them up, shouted a final volley of horrifying abuse, performed an obscene gesture, then hobbled back the way she had come, waving the scissors in gleeful triumph.

"A depressing spectacle," said Wingo sadly. "The woman has quite demeaned herself."

This is pity — if of an attenuated sort, and only Wingo shows any. Did she merit her beating? The law of Terce, assuming it exists, sanctions pelt-hunting. They can hardly be expected to blink at mere beatings, but what of us? Beating an old woman, even a thief, is generally regarded as an outrage. In fact this is not the only old woman Maloof has wronged — but of that, more later.

The visit to Terce lasts barely a day or two, which may show how quickly habits are formed. The stay at the precedent port of call, Scropus, is even shorter and, given what transpires there, would seem to reinforce the

* at least in almost any reasonable system of law. Terce, however, is lawless.

idea that adopting new customs and forming new habits requires very little time indeed.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

THE IDEAL PROGRAM BY WHICH EACH NEW SOCIETY IS SHAPED, BY SOME AS YET UNENUNCIATED LAW OF CONDUCT, BEGINS TO GENERATE ITS OWN OBVERSE, OR OPPOSITE, IMPULSE, WHICH IN DUE COURSE OVERCOMES THE ORIGINAL SCHEME.

The Book of Dreams

Terce is the second port of call. The population is engaged in a mutual man-hunt. Everyone is a murderer. At Coro-Coro they also slaughtered each other, but at least they had an ecological ideal. On Star Home larceny is also a way of life but, like the potters of Firsk, their ultimate goal is artistic, not profit. Murder is not part of their culture. But on Terce:

Both Shuja and Meluli export bales of leather tanned from human hides. They both claim that they have nothing else to export, so they must make do.

Profit is their aim. Terce is a moral abyss where humanity is sunk into a totally debased selfishness.

The attitudes of the *Ǧlicca's* crew on Terce are not, as some might think, 'typically vancian' but a reflection of the Tercian milieu.

On Scropus, the first port of call, a remarkable degree of civility predominates.

Myron supervised the discharge of cargo. There were three large cases destined for the Refunctionary, but when he started to unload them he was approached by the superintendent of the facility, a mild-seeming person of middle age named Euel Ǧartover. He wore a neat blue, white and black uniform and spoke with such modest civility that Myron was instantly sympathetic to his request.

The society of Scropus is a variation of the society of *Blue World*.* In that story a prison ship is marooned on a world. A society develops which forgets its criminal origins but retains a terminology of crime for its caste system. Scropus was also founded by criminals, led by the terrible Imbald, Sultan of Space. When Imbald is brought to justice by the IPCC he avoids execution by holding the beauty of his own creation, the fabled palace Fanchen Lalu, hostage. In exchange for Fanchen Lalu he is imprisoned for life, in acceptable circumstances. Execution is avoided.

This pocket history must not be passed over too quickly. It is no more gratuitous than other vancian epigraphs. The story of the Tamarchô, of Alastor 965, Rhamnotis, for example, is opposite to, but prepares, the story of the Fanchers on Trullion. If murder merits death Imbald merits execution thousands of times over. The tavern girl at Sholo only planned a single murder, yet Myron feels no pity when she dies at his own hand. The Shuja boy is denied his precious knife in another murder attempt — he is lucky Fay does not slaughter him. Only the old robber woman is shown a modicum of pity: her 'glitzers' are restored, facilitating her next robbery attempt. In the case of Imbald his sentence is infinitely reduced for the sake of a mere artifact — which, by the time the *Ǧlicca* reaches the planet several centuries later, has become run-down and is now used as a prison. It is as if Saddam could trade his life against his presidential palaces. Saddam's palaces are no Fanchen Lalus; they are vulgar tinsel. But it is not impossible to be both monster and artist; Saddam's palaces might each have been ten times more lovely than the Taj Mahal, and some clever French surgeon might have implanted a trigger in his brain to detonate bombs in the foundations in case of execution. In such a case should Donald Rumsfeld, chief of the Third Millennium's IPCC, spare Saddam? If a peaceable future is what is sought, it would seem that harsh retribution against Imbald and his thugs would not have been necessary:

The current inhabitants of Scropus were for the most part descendants of the Sultan's henchmen, who had been allowed estates about the countryside. They showed little of their original ferocity, living somnolent lives, disapproving of the Refunctionary, and occasionally visiting Duhail for a meeting of the Ǧarden Club, or perhaps one of the Outreach Society's cultural seminars.

The old ways are gone. This society has become mild to the point of insipidity. Their disapproval of the Refunctionary is probably placated to a degree by its serving also as an *Institute of Advanced Penology and a laboratory for psycho-pathological research*. As Refunctionary director, Euel Gartover, explains to the *Ǧlicca's* crew, its methods are a triumph of angelic attitudes at the opposite end of a moral scale the other extreme of which is exemplified

---

* *"The wood of this table, for instance, grows in the sea. It is rooted underwater at a depth of four hundred feet. It sends a massive trunk toward the surface. In all directions filaments stream out, as much as a hundred feet, absorbing the submarine light. When the trunk reaches the surface, it spreads out to become a circular pad of tough tissue, and from the center of this pad grow a hundred flexible whips supporting the fruiting organs. It is a wonderful plant, and every part is useful."*

Euel Gartover to the *Ǧlicca's* crew; chapter 4 section 3.

by Terce. The visit to Scropus must be read with care. Gartover explains:

We must act tactfully; some of our murderers are damnably proud folk, and we do not want to inflict new lesions upon their self-image. This is how we think of venal acts — as psychic lesions to be healed. We avoid unnecessary stigma and to this end we have evolved a playful little ruse, and I refer to the color of the caps. Murderers wear white . . . Arsonists wear purple; mutilators wear pink, while sexual activists wear brown, and so it goes. The system fosters a healthy rivalry, with each group vying for excellence. Our games are often exciting because of the cheers and enthusiasm. Everyone is spirited; no one is demoralized: that is our goal. A man may state, almost with pride: 'Yes! I was a wife-beater! Now I have put aside all remorse, and I feel the better for it!'"

Who among the *Glicca's* crew is most affected by this? The hard-headed Schwatzendale? Of course not.

Wingo was impressed. "It seems as if great things are being done."

But Gartover is no impractical dreamer. He knows that evil is real:

Gartover made a rueful gesture. "I won't deny that we have our disappointments. Some of our folk are intrinsically antisocial. We try to avoid the word 'evil', though I suppose it all comes out of the same bucket."

"And how do you deal with these folk?"

"We try our best techniques: friendly counsel, dramatic enactments demonstrating the positive values of decency, meditation, work-therapy, hypnosis."

Gartover noticed Schwatzendale's slantwise smile and sighed. "When I use the word 'hypnosis', I arouse skepticism, without fail."

"I was born without illusions," said Schwatzendale.

Gartover smiled. "'Skepticism' is sometimes known as 'dogmatic ignorance'."

Cynicism is not vancian, any more than Scropian practical-angelism (to coin a term) is. But in Gartover's last speech we may be touching a vancian constant. 'No dogma fits every dog' is Wingo's favorite dictum. Skepticism of dogma is 'original skepticism'. Today, skepticism has become synonymous with cynicism, which means a dog-like attitude, or ignorance, or rejection, of the difference between good and evil. This is not Vance's attitude. Vance is quintessentially moderate. An opinion, whatever it may be in detail, that affirms the existence of evil, is the foundation of morality. Since it must take the form of a truth-statement (i.e. 'murder is bad'), it is, ipso facto a dogma. In the exchange with Gartover which follows, each crew member affirms the existence of evil, or shows skepticism, according to the color of his personality: Schwatzendale with extravagant pitilessness, Myron with mild straight-forwardness, Wingo with mystical vagaries, and Maloof with laconic modesty:

Schwatzendale refused to be daunted. "I have met a number of evil men. Just as water is wet and space is wide, these men were wicked through and through, in every wisp, shard, tangle and tuft of their beings. You can hypnotize them as you like; they will remain irredemptible."

Gartover looked from face to face. "And you others? Are you equally skeptical?"

Wingo said soberly, "I have always considered hypnosis a parlor game. The savants tell us of the Cosmic principle, which, so they declare, controls 'All'. When we have transcended to the seventh level, then we shall understand the ultimates of good and evil. There is no reference to hypnotism."

"A profound statement, certainly." Gartover addressed Myron. "And you, sir?"

Myron considered a moment, then said, "I suspect that many of your mistake-makers, once they are loose, will put hypnotism aside and return to murdering their grandmothers."

Gartover sighed and looked to Maloof. "What of you, sir?"

Maloof shrugged. "Like the others, I am dubious in regard to hypnotism, although I know little of the subject."

Gartover laughed. "We will not convince each other — not today at any rate. So now, allow me to offer you refreshment."

The last line, an apparent throw-away, is to the contrary crucial. Gartover's joviality is more than generous sentiment, and the quiet implication (a nice example of vancian subtlety) that he may, after all, convince them on a day other than today, is more than idle talk. The crew is eventually forced to admit that Gartover got the better of them. The implications of this are not explored in a conversation among the crew, but the reader need not abstain from reflection upon them.

The implication of hypnotism, to say nothing of the rest of the apparently goody-goody Refunctionary system, and despite Gartover's apparently contradictory statements, is that evil is not real. To put this another way, hypnotism is 'instant culture'. The inmates of the Refunctionary have been freed from a culture in which they were oppressed by evil — by the guilt of their evil acts. They live in a new culture, a new reality, where evil does not exist. They are free of their burden of guilt, and

so they are happy and productive.

This idea is echoed on a different register, in a speech by Linus Kershaw the savant pilgrim, in the context of the misty culture of Mariah:

. . . each individual, willy-nilly, generates his own universe, of which he, or she, is the Supreme Being.

One of the great tensions is the contrast between reality and individual perception. It is not resolved by extreme measures, such as rejecting reality (the individual generates his own universe) or rejecting individuality (reality is generated by culture, or hypnosis). Another great tension is between 'science' (what man knows through his own powers) and religion (what is revealed to man by prophets, oracles, signs, ghosts, arcane texts and occasional intimations). Vance is a 'moderate' because he insists on the balancing act between these irreconcilable poles. He rejects facile elimination of the paradoxes which undergird life.

Moderation is not dramatized with examples of moderation but with dramatization of paradox, because moderation is not a state of equilibrium — as is extremism — but a confused state of being thrown back and forth.*

Each port of call has a different culture. Their differences are the base line of a story the melodies of which are adventures in these contrasting milieus. Like the use of epigraphs, another vancian structural trick is to build stories on related societies, whose differences meaningfully support his theme. The eden-esque tranquility and natural beauty of Maske, for example, is underlined by the loud commercial vulgarity of Eiselbar, or the egalitarianism of Arrabus (on Wyst) is contrasted by the state of nature prevailing in the Weirdlands. After Scropus (where culture, or moral reality, is generated by man) comes Terce, the most evil culture Vance ever invented, where murder is an act as banal as picking an apple.

The culture of Terce may be horrific, and false, but it is effective — or as effective as possible. Yet even on Terce human beings retain a scrap of their humanity. Tercian obfuscation of fundamental reality (in favor of a culture of radical personal profit), like the sheer evaporation of evil at the Refunctionary, is hypnotism. This is no vancian fairytale. The Islamo-fascists think it is fine to slice heads off non-Muslims, chop hands off thieves, stone women for adultery, drop atom bombs on Israel. The hypnotism allowing the human-bomb to push his button must be powerful, but it is the rare individual who fails to have his hypnotic state disturbed when directly confronted with his own death.

Shimmering behind the word 'lurulu', behind the problem of mortality, is the miracle of our own lives, the sanctity of life itself, and the ur-story of human fate.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Myron is almost killed several times. At the Glad Song Tavern he was tempted into danger by selfish lust. When he helps rescue the graceless and ungrateful Madam Maloof, he is, again, responsible for his own danger, through selfless friendship for Maloof.

Dame Hester is willful, dynamic and driven by a potent if illusory inner purpose with which we can't help having a certain sympathy. Madam Maloof is merely peevish and self-indulgent. Dame Hester uses Myron to further her personal schemes, and discards him when he proves inconvenient. The relation of Maloof to his mother is very different, even opposite. Dame Hester is guilty with respect to Myron. Her eventual consciousness of this is demonstrated in her dying gesture. Maloof, on the other hand, is guilty with respect to his mother. To see this one must take Vance's sometimes delicate hints:

My father and I were never on the best of terms — my fault more than his, so I understand now [. . .] For one reason or another, three years passed before I put into Traven. I was a year too late [. . .] I was troubled by the circumstances of my father's death; I had come to revere, if not love him.

'For one reason or another', but what reason exactly? Maloof's and Myron's parents want their sons to become bankers. Both reject this. Maloof, however, goes farther; he neglects his parents through more or less foolish or un-self-conscious egoism. They annoy and fatigue him. The guilt which accumulates, and eventually oppresses him, is real. Had he been a more dutiful son, had he realized sooner the deeper qualities of his father, he might have saved his parents from Tremaine. But even if his father were as tiresome as Maloof youthfully felt, they are still his parents. The wife of Socrates, Xanthippe, was a terrible shrew; Xenophon reports what Socrates said to his exasperated son, Lamprocles, about filial duty. His mother might be extremely fatiguing but he should consider how, when he was a helpless infant, she fed and protected him, nursed him when he was sick, put up with his squalling.

Myron, by contrast, at least not yet, has nothing to reproach himself. His relationship with his parents

* That Vance might reject, or accept, Christianity has nothing to do with this. His openness to 'spiritual experience' (in the most basic sense of the term) is as fundamental as is his acceptance of 'rationality'. They may not be 'compatible', at least to our limited minds, but they coexist.

remains without such guilt, and he did as much for his aunt as he could. Myron does not commit Maloof's errors of exasperation or indifference. This explains the difference between Myron and Maloof. Myron's soul is fresh. As Schwatzendale says, he does not have *a care in the world*. He has nothing to reproach himself. Maloof's soul is tarnished. He seeks to renew it. He broods over his guilt, his part in an evil he now must seek to repair. Had he heeded the Fifth Commandment ["Honor thy father and thy mother"], that foundational element of 'basic Earth culture',* he might not now be sunk in regret.

Myron is either luckier, or better constituted, than Maloof. Be this as it may, Myron is the privileged witness to Maloof's problem. At the end of the story we re-encounter Myron's parents who:

. . . were secretly perturbed by the casual conduct of Myron and his companions. They thankfully returned to Lilling convinced that Myron's friends were vagabonds, intent upon infecting him with their own deplorable standards.

Reflection on Maloof's experience, or the color of Maloof's soul, plays a part in making Myron's choice to rejoin the *Çlicca* 'dismal'.

In contrast to Terce, Fiametta is a normal, moderate place, where civil pleasures and friendly feeling can flourish — unless you attempt art theft against the Chan Overmen, but what civilized society sanctions theft? Even at the Grand Lalapalooza, as Maloof remarks, *the only evidence of venality seems to be Moncrief*. Maloof is being facetious because the next day he takes Moncrief as passenger aboard the *Çlicca*. The Chan Overmen, even if they do have a legitimate grievance, may be as callous as the boy-assassin and crone-thief of Terce, and yet, rather than depriving them of their things or beating them:

Maloof stood back while Wingo dealt with the wounded Chan, bandaging the injury and staunching the flow of blood. Tearing a strip from the hem of the Chan's cloak, he contrived a sling, into which he cradled the Chan's arm.

Even their guns are returned. After arranging affairs between the Garwigs and the Chan Overmen, Maloof urges the foolish Joss Garwig to accept his judgement, with these words: *No one is happy, but no one is dead*. Life, on Fiametta, if not sacred is at least of more value than on Terce, even for the decadent Overmen.

On Terce culture is reduced to a Hobbesian 'state of nature' minimum. On Fiametta civility prevails, so that life may become a jolly romp of spectacle and consumerism — including that variety of consumerism known as 'religious freedom'.* Its critics call this the 'capitalist ideal', or even 'the end of history'. Fiametta is the golden mean between Scropus and Terce, but on another scale Fiametta and Terce and are polar opposites; extremes of 'civil society' and 'barbarism' — hypnotic states both.

On Fiametta Myron encounters Tibbet, an exemplar of the milieu. The girl at the Glad Song Tavern, by contrast, is definitely a sister of Jean Parlier, Drusilla Wales, Wayness Tamm or Skirlet Hutsenreiter. Vance calls Jean Parlier 'admirable'. But this girl is far more so. Tibbet, though not without qualities, in the image of our contemporary Fiametta-like culture, is a typically empty-headed and willful little slattern:

Tibbet sauntered into the saloon, yawning, stretching, hitching the pajama trousers more snugly up around her rump, and going so far as to scratch the same rump with indolent fingers. She was three or four years younger than Myron, pretty, with a reckless mop of dark hair and a smoulder at the back of her eyes. She looked Schwatzendale over, after which she surveyed Myron. Then, with a rather ambiguous shrug, she turned away and thoughtfully studied her fingernails.

Even her pedigree is poor. Not counting Mirl, who has some sense and heart, the charming Garwig family is a 'sub-standard milieu', leaving only a narrow margin for surprise at the dénouement of Myron's love affair. Myron's flame, if comprehensible, is as hollow and foolish as Dame Hester's also comprehensible pursuit of youthful allure. Myron may prefer to forget his obsession with Tibbet. It would seem easy enough to do. On the other hand he may find himself unable to expunge the memory of a certian Shuja girl with a secret name. He may end up like Maloof, stung by bitter regret and hopeless guilt, wandering the universe in search of the one thing it fails to contain, a thing he himself has destroyed.

* In *Coup de Çrace* Magnus Ridolph explains to Pan Pascoglu:

"Mr. Starguard is an Earthman, and is subject to the influence of our basic Earth culture. Unlike many men and near-men of the outer worlds, he has been inculcated with the idea that human life is valuable. . . "

* They set out along an avenue, which first passed a field devoted to the asseveration of spiritual verities, and another where the same beliefs were ridiculed and refuted. Special cults: meta-men, paramystics, futurians, vegetarians, yagayagas, each convening in a private sector, where each sect celebrated its own style of reality. There was an occasional immolation and at times a boy might be sent climbing up a swaying ladder of snakes, until, with a final startled outcry, he disappeared into the sky, leaving his parents standing below, staring up in perplexity.

Letters . . .

Dear Editor,

In case you or readers are interested:

In *Cosmopolis* 54 Richard Heaps remarks on a Reno 911 skit mentioning "wizard's prismatic spray," and with understandable glee speculates that this is likely a reference to Vance's own Excellent Prismatic Spray. To clarify as per my own possibly flawed understanding: it certainly is a reference to Vance, but indirect. I think it's more likely that the inside joke was meant for players of Dungeons & Dragons (ahem), a fantasy role-playing game in which spell-casting wizards often appear.

Initial versions of the game laid out its rules, but did not specify any particular imaginary world in which sessions should be played. Lacking a cohesive background, the game's fantasyelement was shaped by tropes and conventions lifted from what I assume were itsauthors' favorite fantasy novels. So, there was no mention of Middle Earth, but the game world was inhabited by elves, dwarves, orcs, "halflings," etc. There was no Dying Earth, but wizards had to memorize spells after each casting erased them from their minds. They could select from a compendium featuring such familiar Vance-like entries as "Excellent Prismatic Spray" and "Bigby's Forceful Hand." Some were merely similar in phrase, some apparently were taken directly from the Dying Earth stories. I can't recall any further examples, but it's interesting to note that Vance has had as large an influence as Tolkien on a phenomenon like Dungeons & Dragons, which continues to be a pop-cultural force of its own, as we can see by watching Reno 911.

Josh Snyder
Boston, Massachussets

-☼-

To the Editor:

I once jokingly told Jack Vance that he used the phrase "not my title" so often that he ought to have a rubber stamp made with this slogan.

In *Cosmopolis* 52, Paul Rhoads discussed a controversy regarding a new title adopted for a particular novel in the VIE. While preparing the essay in this issue about some of the editors in Vance's early career, I got to thinking about Vance's titles and the alternative titles that editors have often selected for his works.

First, let me say I believe the VIE policy regarding titles is the only acceptable option, legally and morally. Legally, Jack Vance owns the works being published, which cannot be reproduced without his permission. Therefore, to the degree that Vance insists, the VIE has no choice but to use the titles he prefers.

Morally, titles selected by others in the past, even when superior to Vance's own choices, are not part of Jack Vance's creative effort. Since the whole concept of the VIE is to produce an edition of Vance's works as close as possible to the author's texts and intentions, using titles chosen by Vance is mandatory.

That said, I would like to defend (to a limited degree) some of the editors who changed Vance's titles and to propose a possibly outrageous thesis: that, as remarkably gifted as Vance is as a writer, he is not especially adept at composing titles for his works. Or, to offer an alternative interpretation, Vance is a strong individualist. His idea of a good title for a particular work may not satisfy commercial interests, but that is of little concern to Vance.

It is of concern to publishers. In commercial fiction, the title of a work is not entirely within the author's prerogative. The title, like the cover artwork and the choice of genre label, is part of the publisher's marketing strategy. Ideally, the author and the publisher will agree on a title that satisfies both the author's artistic sensibilities and the publisher's commercial considerations.

In my view, the editor (Damon Knight?) who changed Vance's title, *Mazirian the Magician*, to *The Dying Earth* did Vance an enormous favor. Vance's choice is neither logical nor particularly memorable. The character Mazirian only appears in two of the six episodes in the story suite. By this standard, the book could have been titled 'Turjan of Miir' or 'Liane the Wayfarer' with equal justice.

As Gene Wolfe has pointed out, the imaginative setting of these stories is Jack Vance's most enduring "character". *The Dying Earth* is a brilliant choice of title for this set of stories. This title captured the imagination of fantasy readers, and "a dying earth story" has become a generic term in the SF/F field for any story set in a declining, far-future terrestrial age. The stories in *The Dying Earth* were noteworthy at the time, but the title established Vance as an icon in fantastic literature.

To Live Forever was Betty Ballantine's choice, not Vance's. But *Clarges* is an incomprehensible title on the bookstore shelf. I'm not even sure how to pronounce it. *To Live Forever* is utterly dull, but it does convey the SF content (immortality) of the novel.

Planet of the Damned in magazine form became *Slaves of the Klau* as an Ace Double paperback. Vance prefers *Gold*

and Iron, which baffles me. I check my bookshelf and find that *Gold and Iron* is also the title of a book subtitled "Bismarck, Bleichroeder, and the Building of the German Empire". *Gold and Iron* is an excellent title for a book about the Iron Chancellor and the financier who helped him achieve his goals. But to me, either of the earlier two (admittedly lurid) titles better represents the story and conveys the sense of SF adventure that the publisher wanted to project.

As a title, *The Five Gold Bands* at least refers to the objects that are central to the story (and since this short novel appeared in an SF magazine, this title didn't need to scream "science fiction"). When the magazine story title was changed to *The Space Pirate* by the folks at Toby Press for their paperback edition, they were telling potential readers to get ready for some exciting SF (even if the hero isn't actually a pirate). Vance's choice, *The Rapparee*, leaves me scratching my head. Most readers will respond as I did: Huh?

I can't join Vance in deploring *The Eyes of the Overworld* as the title of the first Cugel novel. (Whether the term should be overworld or underworld is a matter of interpretation. While the magical cusps come from the underworld, they provide wondrous views of what is surely the overworld.) *The Skybreak Spatterlight* is a fine title for the second novel. In each case, these titles refer to the objects that are central to the stories.

The two Cugel novels are really one extended tale. Vance's choice for the first half, *Cugel the Clever*, is a good collective title for the entire Cugel duology. Originally published as individual stories, each chapter already has its own title. If I were omnipotent, I would title the combined volume *Cugel the Clever* and title each of the two major parts *The Eyes of the Overworld* and *The Skybreak Spatterlight*.

Don't get me started on *The Magnificent Showboats of the Upper Vissel River, Lune XXIII, Big Planet*. However, it does include the word 'planet', a useful genre tag.

Finally, the vortex of controversy, *The Wankh*. Inexplicably, as a young man in the American Midwest in 1969, I was aware of the vulgar British term that so resembles Vance's original title. The similarity didn't bother me. There are so many homophones in English that one just ignores them. Wankh is not wank.

When Vance learned what wank means in another part of the English-speaking world, he was embarrassed. But why should he be, when his British publishers aren't? If anyone would be sensitive to a vaguely obscene title, it would surely be the proper English gentlemen at Mayflower Books and Dennis Dobson. Clearly, there's no cause for distress or, therefore, a title change (ignoring the occasional snicker from British sellers of this book on eBay).

At worst, *The Wankh* is edgy. *The Wannek* does nothing for me. But this is Vance's book. In the VIE, if nowhere else, he should be allowed to name it.

David B. Williams
Indianapolis, Indiana

David Williams is a Vance aficionado and frequent contributor to Cosmopolis.

Frontispiece for volume 32

Letters . . . Wanted

TELL US WHAT THE VIE HAS MEANT TO YOU!

In this issue of *Cosmopolis* the Work Tsar announces that the end is drawing nigh! Plans for printing the final volumes are in place and volunteers are ready to travel to Milan to pack them for shipping. There are some subsequent responsibilities including filling orders for additional sets that were not received prior to the printing of Wave 1 as well as printing and shipping the Ellery Queen volume. But the end of the effort is indeed in sight. Even then, the VIE's final work-product will have a lasting effect as it is utilized by publishers producing future editions of Jack Vance's writings.

Till Noever's article at the front of this issue certainly expresses the emotions which all volunteers must feel at the VIE's accomplishment. This experience has instilled an editorial discipline in each volunteer. In a more personally gratifying sense the VIE has enabled each volunteer to contribute to the legacy of an author whom they enjoy and who has a far-reaching impact on readers around the world. Few authors living today have had that honor bestowed on them, and each volunteer intuitively knows that they have had a significant part in that effort.

Cosmopolis is also approaching its end. Like the VIE, *Cosmopolis* has been a volunteer effort reflecting the spirit which motivated the entire project. The early issues served to communicate the goals, policies and procedures of the VIE. They gave substance to the vision of the VIE. It was also the place where volunteers learned the names of other volunteers, received recognition for their contributions, and communicated thoughts and ideas pertaining to the VIE and Jack Vance.

My own involvement with the VIE started with a bookmark inserted in a used Vance book I ordered from a dealer in England. That bookmark contained information about the VIE and its purpose of reprinting all of Jack Vance's works. As a volunteer I have since read most of those books and stories and have even had the opportunity to talk with Jack Vance himself. I am sure I am not alone in my experiences.

What made YOU sign up as a volunteer? What kept you going? How was your life changed forever? Who will you sell your VIE books to? Did your spouse divorce you because of your time spent on the VIE? Name one author, if any, who would inspire you to sign on to a similar project. Who wants to have a big party when it's over?

Tell the volunteers what the VIE has meant to you.

David Reitsema
Editor

End Note

Thanks to proofreaders *Steve Sherman*, *Rob Friefeld* and *Jim Pattison* and to *Joel Anderson* for his composition work.

COSMOPOLIS SUBMISSIONS: when preparing articles for *Cosmopolis*, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send raw text. For *Cosmopolis* 58, please submit articles and letters-to-the-editor to David Reitsema: Editor@vanceintegral.com.

Deadline for submissions is January 31, 2005.

Frontispiece for volume 3

VIE Contacts

The VIE web page:
www.vanceintegral.com

For questions regarding subscription:
subscribe@vanceintegral.com

To volunteer on the project:
volun@vanceintegral.com

To report textual errors in Wave 1:
errata@vanceintegral.com

Paul Rhoads, VIE Editor-in-Chief:
prhoads@club-internet.fr

R.C. Lacovara, Business Manager:
Lacovara@vanceintegral.com

Suan Yong, Process Integrity:
suan@cs.wisc.edu

Joel Riedesel, Work Flow Commissar:
jriedesel@jnana.com

Damien Jones, Double-Digitizing:
damien.jones@shaw.ca

Ron Chernich, Techno-Proofing:
chernich@dstc.edu.au

Alun Hughes, Textual Editor-in-Chief:
alun.hughes@btinternet.com

Steve Sherman, Textual Integrity Administration:
steve.sherman@t-online.de

John Foley, Composition:
johnfoley79@optonline.net

Christian J. Corley, Post-Proofing:
cjc@io.com

John Schwab, Archivist:
jschwab@dslnorthwest.net

Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Ombudsman:
hans@vie.tmfweb.nl